DON'T GET CONNED! SEE PAGE 88

FREE GAME TOOL SPELL AREA TEMPLATE

OFFICIAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® MAGAZINE

DRAGON®

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21 ALCHEMY ITEMS

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Take *Dragon's* newest feature to the table

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GAME ROOM

8 Wyrm's Turn
Your name is Gladiator.

10 Scale Mail
You dish it out. We take it.

16 Up on a Soapbox
To the moon Robilar, to the moon.

ON THE COVER

Kalman Andrasofszky's work has been the talk of the magazine for months, and we're anxious to hear what you think of his first cover.

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In a city run by thieves, you've always got to know your con.

WYRM'S TURN
FROM THE EDITOR

Get in the Ring

Just before Gen Con, I started preparing a new campaign to run here at Paizo HQ. Inspired by the upcoming "Campaign Components: Gladiators," the campaign occurs entirely within the confines of one gladiatorial arena, and since we play at lunchtime, each session consists of only one encounter (either roleplaying or combat). Since the campaign also allows players a lot of freedom to retire characters, to lose characters to death matches, and to incorporate playtest material, any time a player asked, "Can I play an? . . ." I wanted to say yes.

This attitude of inclusion was an outgrowth of looking around the Paizo offices. Saying that there are "a lot" of D&D and d20 books in the office is like saying that the sun is "warm," and I wanted to let folks use that material. Plus, *Dungeon* Editor Chris "Can I play a troll?" Thomasson was going to complain if I didn't let him play an unusual character.

At the time, I was also preparing for what turned into one of my favorite events at this year's Gen Con: the Wizards of the Coast seminar entitled "Play with Everything." As you can guess from its title, the seminar discussed just how much D&D and d20 material a campaign could hold—an attempt to offer some advice to those players and DMs who felt like they can't keep track of it all. At the time, I didn't think much of the seminar's premise because in many ways, I think this problem isn't a problem—having "too many" good ideas to use in a campaign or "too many" character concepts that I'm excited about is the kind of dilemma that I want to have. Skeptic though I was, I agreed to sit on the panel and share some of the ideas that the *Dragon* staff uses to pull material into the campaigns that we run. Even though I went in with an attitude of tolerance rather than excitement, I walked out of the seminar busily jotting down ideas for a refined version of The Arena. There were enough good ideas from fans and my fellow panelists on how to incorporate rules and material from many sources that, in a moment of total goob-itude, I decided to skip lunch and go work the notes for my fledgling gladiatorial campaign.

Although there were a lot of great individual ideas, my favorite answer to this so-called dilemma boiled down to "talk about the kind of game that you want." DMs and players share the responsibility of making the game fun, and it's not the DM's job to master everything—there's nothing that helps a DM more than players seeking out new material, offering suggestions and feedback, or showing an interest in how their characters develop.

A lot also depends on the structure of the campaign. In the Forgotten Realms for example, it's pretty easy to imagine a sophisticated duergar merchant doing business on the streets of Waterdeep, but in a Crusades historical campaign (currently #1 on the "campaigns that it'd sure be fun to run if I was independently wealthy" list), I'd have no trouble restricting players to humans. In The Arena, I'm keeping the world outside the gladiatorial games deliberately vague so that any new idea or mechanic can find its way into the campaign.

If you saw issue #299's "Campaign Components: Knights" or if you take a look at this issue's "Campaign Components: Swashbucklers" you'll see examples of this philosophy in print. The core of the "Campaign Components" series is showing how any idea, no matter how far outside the norm for the campaign, can fit to some degree. So if you play in a game that includes lots of interesting or new ideas, join us on the *Dragon* message boards or send a letter to **scalemail@paizopublishing.com** and share your success story. Conversely, if you've had problems incorporating material into your game, whether from *Dragon* or another source, tap the growing community of players and DMs for ideas.

Editor-in-Chief

DRAGON TALK

Dungeon Wins!

Hats off to *Dragon*'s best friend in the roleplaying business, *Dungeon/Polyhedron*. The magazine and its editing super-duo Chris Thomasson and Erik Mona were awarded this year's "Ennie" for best roleplaying supplement. If you haven't checked out the mega-magazine that is *Dungeon/Polyhedron*, you're missing out on the best adventures and coolest d20 games the industry has to offer.

Iconic Icons

The helpful little symbols you see below this blurb are a new addition to *Dragon*, designed to signal players and DMs that we've done some of the work of integrating the material into a campaign for them. You'll find these symbols beside the "For Your Character" and "For Your Campaign" sidebars in this and future issues. As always, let us know what you think.

For Your Character

For Your Campaign

Character Sheet

Page 114 (the last printed interior page) is a new, art-intensive character sheet. We're trying out this new feature in this issue and in the upcoming issue #302. These new sheets are on a trial basis, and we'd love it if you'd send a note to **scalemail@paizopublishing.com** to rate the new feature.

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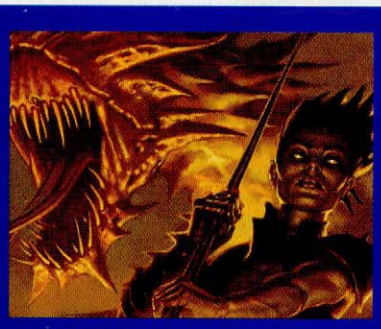

MAGIC!

UPON A FEARFUL SUMMONS
by Charles Dunwoody
Customize your spellcasters with new summoning variants, rules for custom summoning lists, and balanced rules for summoning nearly any monster.

THE PLAY'S THE THING: Making Magic Wondrous
by Mike Mearls
There's more to playing a spellcaster than picking your daily spells. Use these guidelines to give your spells a look and feel that reflects your character's personality and spellcasting style.

ARCANE LORE: A Clutch of Cantrips
by Kieran Turley
A new batch of cantrips that prove there's nothing minor about magic.

THE BESTIARY: Constructs of Destruction
by Eric Cagle
Construct, automaton, golem—words that evoke images of powerful man-made beasts. Implacable horrors like the web golem, the rope golem, and the alchemical golem await the spellcaster powerful enough to build and bind them.

CLASS ACTS: The Tainted
by Chris Tanner
Bound by demons and twisted by devils, the tainted grow in power as they grow in corruption. This versatile prestige class isn't just for crazed NPCs; it represents a character's struggle with the power and temptation of ultimate evil. Will you succumb?

DUNGEONCRAFT: Running Large Encounters
by Monte Cook
The sequel to issue #301's "Planning Large Encounters," the second installment of the new "Dungeoncraft" series walks players and DMs through running and participating in D&D encounters with a dozen or more participants.

Inside you'll also find new fiction from Robert Vardeman, "Elminster's Guide to the Realms," "Silicon Sorcery: Neverwinter Nights," and more advice, tools, and tactics to improve your game!

READERS TALK BACK
SCALE MAIL

Grand Melee

I borrowed issue #299 from my brother, and I really liked "Campaign Components: Knights." I'm a big fan of elven paladins, and this article helped me flesh out my paladin more than *Defenders of the Faith.* The length of the article didn't bother me at all!

I was DMing our latest adventure and put a tournament in it. There was something in there for the bard/rogue and the barbarian/fighter, as well as my paladin. Everyone had something to do. The running at the rings was fun, as was the javelin toss. I loved the whole tournament! It took 2 hours for the tournament to be played out, but it was well worth it. We plan on having different tournaments in different towns now.

I have no gripes about the honor point system, tournament rules, new paladin spells, or anything else! Kudos to the writers and to the staff of *Dragon Magazine.* Thanks for the focus on paladins and knights! I really liked it a lot!

Loki
From the *Dragon* message boards

The Prodigal Gamer

I have read *Dragon Magazine* from the time when it was in double digit issue numbers. I abandoned the magazine during 2nd edition, but I began reading again with the advent of the 3rd edition. I've never felt compelled to write in before, but I had to make sure my voice was added to the feedback you are sure to receive regarding the addition of the "Campaign Components" feature to your magazine. This is exactly the kind of thing I look for in *Dragon.* I'm a rules-light DM, and I am much more interested in ideas that I can add to my campaign than in what new rules will allow me or my players to pull off. New spells and monsters are nice, as is "Elminster's Guide," since they provide things that I can drop into my campaign, but "Campaign Components" offers new ideas of a much broader scope. Thank you! It's a great idea, and I hope you'll keep it around.

Don Tucker
Austin, TX

We've received many compliments about the "Campaign Components: Knights" article, and we fully intend on continuing the irregular series in Dragon. Check out this issue's "Campaign Components: Swashbucklers" on page 20, and look forward to issue #303's "Campaign Components: Gladiators." The gladiators article, by the way, inspired a new campaign here in the Paizo offices, and if you're interested, you can see the first few notes about the new campaign in this month's Wyrm's Turn.

For Immature Audiences Only?

I just received *Dragon* #299 and read the previews for issue #300. I am concerned about the future of Dungeons & Dragons, the hobby that I love. I started playing at the age of 13. Through middle school, high school, college, and adulthood, my 13 years of gaming contain many joyful memories. After reading in previous letters that players are now gaming with their young children, I find it inspiring to know that the game still thrives.

My concern is that your "villains" topic is not meant for immature players, and the future of D&D is the young people playing now. If I was 13 and brought these types of articles home, my parents would have stopped my enthusiasm for the hobby immediately. I have not read the articles but presume they are for adult readers and wrapped in a special section. At least I hope it will be given the content that is listed. Is this fair to your young subscribers? *Dragon* always claims to be the subscribers' magazine, but you are excluding part of your subscriber market.

I understand that these topics happen in real life, and some players might

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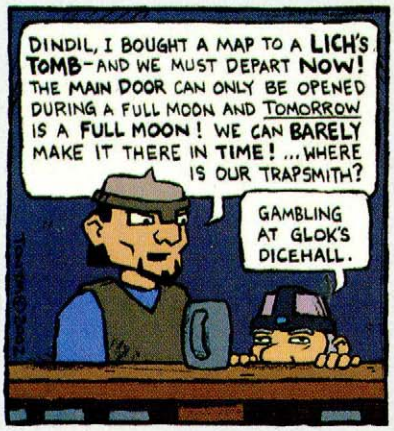
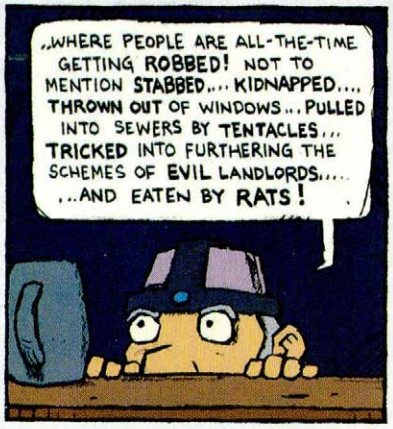
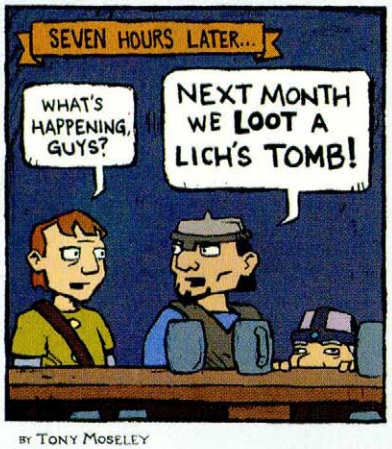
ZOGONIA


DINDIL, I BOUGHT A MAP TO A LICH'S TOMB-AND WE MUST DEPART NOW! THE MAIN DOOR CAN ONLY BE OPENED DURING A FULL MOON AND TOMORROW IS A FULL MOON! WE CAN BARELY MAKE IT THERE IN TIME! ...WHERE IS OUR TRAPSMITH?
GAMBLING AT GLOK'S DICEHALL.

NOT A PROBLEM. LEAD ME TO GLOK'S AND WE WILL PICK HIM UP AS WE LEAVE TOWN.
UHH... GLOK'S IS IN THE SEEDY, LAWLESS PART OF TOWN...
..WHERE THE TOWN GUARD NEVER GOES...


...WHERE PEOPLE ARE ALL-THE-TIME GETTING ROBBED! NOT TO MENTION STABBED... KIDNAPPED... THROWN OUT OF WINDOWS... PULLED INTO SEWERS BY TENTACLES... TRICKED INTO FURTHERING THE SCHEMES OF EVIL LANDLORDS... ...AND EATEN BY RATS!



BY TONY MOSELEY

want to copy this realism. This is fine, but keep it all in your *Book of Vile Darkness*, market this product "For Mature Audiences Only," and allow only mature audiences to purchase the product. Please keep this content out of *DRAGON* so everyone can still enjoy the magazine. Keep it if you want, but I think you are giving the hobby a bad name. I remember an editorial a few months ago pleading readers to write to some legislator because prison inmates were not allowed to play D&D. If you publish articles containing sex, drugs, rape, and torture, I would have to play warden and say "No" to D&D in my prison. In addition, what kind of messages are you sending to the public about the hobby, some who still remember the bad press from the early 1980s? Most importantly, what messages are you teaching the young players of today?

Gerald Mistal
Bethlehem, PA

Many readers took issue with the sealed section in DRAGON #300 before it was published—some even promised to cancel their subscriptions. Now that you have had a chance to read the articles, we're interested in hearing what you think about it.

Conspiracy Theory

This one's been bugging me for a while, but likely for no good reason. In the *DRAGON* logo design, the "g" seems to be encased in a numeral 3, and the same goes in the *DUNGEON* logo. Is this the result of the font used, a deliberate design to associate the magazines subliminally with the 3rd edition, or some other esoteric meaning? I'm probably reading too much into this, and after resolving this I'll stare at some Rorschach inkblot tests and consequently blame my mother for all my problems.

Ben Warner
Address withheld

We tried to ask the designers of the logo about that, but their only response was, "The green monkey flies at midnight." Then there was a bright red flash, and we woke up on a dirt road in Death Valley. Like the number of licks it takes to reach the center of a Tootsie Pop, the question must remain unanswered.

No SASE

I have been looking everywhere, and I can't find a picture of the old "No-SASE ogre." Can you send me a picture of it? I intend to get it tattooed on my left breast.

Carla Fredericks
Address withheld

Um . . .

Open Up

I'm an aspiring d20 writer with a few credits to my name. A while back, I used to be a real fan of *DRAGON*, and I picked up every issue. Then I started hitting walls in my freelance. I knew that anything interesting and crunchy that I found in an article would not be open content and would most likely never be seen again in any rulebook.

I'd pick up a subscription ASAP if I knew that all the new rules—underwater combat, new spells, and new templates—were open game content so they could be used in other products. Why aren't they?

Doug Meerschaert
Address withheld

The short answer is that since Paizo licenses the magazines from Wizards of the Coast, it's actually Wizards of the Coast that owns the rights and articles associated with DRAGON.

The long answer is that the concept of open game content was created to ensure that publishers who use the d20 system and the d20 logo give as much to the system as they gain by using it. While we want DRAGON to contribute more to the d20 system and the continued health of the roleplaying hobby, giving away all of its content could easily lead to the magazine's demise. In the future, selected articles will be released as open game content. Previous articles that featured important new rules, like "Water, Water Everywhere" from issue #291 and "Ramming Speed" from issue #294, are good candidates for open game content and might be released as such at some point in the future.

Given the spirit of cooperation that pervades the Paizo office, the breadth of material that we cover, and our interest in working with the growing d20 industry, you'll see more open content and more interaction with other publishers.

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NOVEMBER

BERTREM'S GUIDE TO THE WAR OF SOULS, VOLUME II
A DRAGONLANCE anthology
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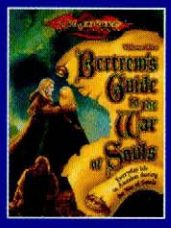

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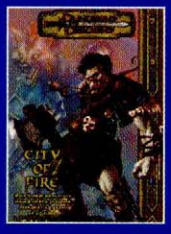

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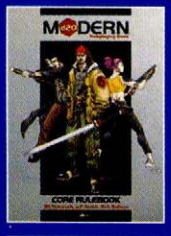

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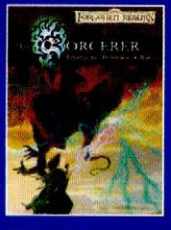

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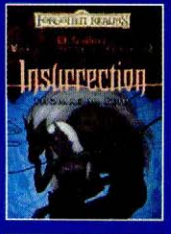

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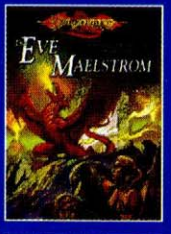

DECEMBER

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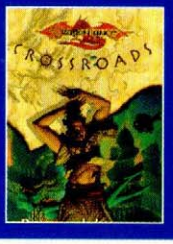

Issue #300 featured the article "The Risen Dead." It asked readers to respond with their desires for what undead should be made into templates. Due to a preview of the article on the Wizards of the Coast website, we received more than a hundred votes before the issue even made it to subscribers. So far, it looks like the shadow, ghast, ghoul, banshee, and bodak are the most requested undead, but keep sending in your votes. Despite the great response to the idea, there were a few people who voiced an opposing opinion:

Template for Rage

I disagree with the idea that "all undead must be templates" that seems to have cropped up within the past year. Further, templates for some of these undead will lead to stupid combinations: shadow shadow dragon shade, anyone? Finally, I have noticed that templates tend to be applied to creatures specifically to cover a creature's weaknesses, and that a number of template-and-base-creature interactions lead to creatures that have all of the advantages of the base creature and none of the disadvantages. For an example, consider the shadow ghoul (read the shadow template in *Manual of the Planes*). So, to reiterate, my vote is for none of the above.

Tarek Okail
Address withheld

Certain monsters will be made more powerful by a given template than another monster of equal CR. There will always be a corner case that the template can't account for and that makes a monster more powerful than usual. Any monster with regeneration can be a problem (imagine a troll immune to fire and acid) as can any monster that is invulnerable to many kinds of attacks (think half-black dragon lernaean pyrohydra). Some DMs apply templates to creatures with the express purpose of eliminating vulnerabilities and making supermonsters, and that's fine—so long as the DM fairly adjusts the monster's CR and makes sure the party doesn't face the monster until they are of appropriate level. To do otherwise is unfair and makes the game less fun. D

CAPTION CONTEST

What's so funny? Why, you are! So send your caption for this cartoon to **Caption/DRAGON Magazine, 3245 146th PL SE Suite 110, Bellevue, WA 98007** by January 1st, and be sure to write "issue #301" somewhere on your entry. Your caption will undergo rigorous testing by the editors, and if it passes, it just might be printed in an upcoming issue. There's no need to cut up your magazine. If you want to include the drawing, send in a photocopy.

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PORPHYRY HOUSE HORROR
by James Jacobs
Something dark is brewing in Scuttlecove—something dark enough to make even this evil city's inhabitants nervous. "Porphyry House Horror" is an adventure intended to be used with the new *Book of Vile Darkness*. Intended for mature audiences, this 32-page adventure will be presented in a special sealed section of issue #95. "Porphyry House Horror" is a D&D adventure for four 10th-level characters.

THE WITCH OF SERPENT BRIDGE
by Russell Brown
A reclusive wise woman is suspected of sabotage and murder, but is she guilty or simply being set up while real danger threatens elsewhere? "The Witch of Serpent Bridge" is a D&D adventure for four 3rd-level characters.

THE JACKAL'S REDEMPTION
by Chad Macphee and Greg Oppedisano
The Jackal once protected the city of Halea's Reach, but now he and his new bride have disappeared, and so have citizens of this small village. "The Jackal's Redemption" is a D&D adventure for four 9th-level characters.

HOLLOW THREATS
by Richard L. J. Pett
A dragon turtle has been sighted near several small hamlets along the coast, and now it's approaching the village in which the PCs have taken refuge. Is this wild story true? If it is, who can stop the wandering monster? "Hollow Threats" is a D&D adventure for four 1st-level characters.

LUST
by J. Bradley Schell
Denizens of the forest have been turning up dead. The strange thing about the deaths is that the creatures—animals, men, and women—always seem to have slain each other in gory, vicious combat. "Lust" is a D&D adventure for four 4th-level characters.

In 2053, our solar system is at war. Freedom-loving colonists on the Moon, Mars, and the moons of Jupiter lash out at an oppressive, resource-drained Earth in an attempt to overthrow the tyranny of the motherworld. The weapons in this struggle? Giant robot armor suits known as mechas. Compatible with the new *d20 Modern Roleplaying Game*, the Mecha Crusade Mini-Game provides everything you need to take the battle to the fascists on Earth or stomp out the colonial militias under a neovulcanium boot.

UP ON A SOAPBOX

All I Need to Know I Learned from D&D

Fly Me to the Moon

by Gary Gygax © 2001 Gary Gygax. All rights reserved.

In the heyday of my Greyhawk campaign, the very best of the score and more of the active players were Rob Kuntz, Ernie Gygax, and Terry Kuntz. Although they, and their PCs, were comrades, there was still a considerable rivalry of friendly sort in regards to which was to be the most outstanding character in the campaign.

To that end, Rob decided that Robilar had to do something really special. After questioning me at length, Rob decided that one of the moons of Oerth was the place to go in order to gain renown unlike any had by another—in my campaign or those we were familiar with. As I as the Dungeon Master would not assist in his planning, he thought to get around that cleverly by employing the most learned sage possible. Of course, as a wily DM I was not about to fall for that, but I was certainly enthusiastic about the concept overall!

After much inquiry and searching in the City of Greyhawk, a figure of considerable acclaim in the academic circles was located. Paying a hefty salary was no problem for the wealthy fighter, so Robilar gained his advisor, Herb the Sage. That name alone should have tipped him off that I was not going to be cooperative in regards to his scheme, but Rob was young, and the game was new, so my own plans went on unhindered.

After Robilar posited his plan to Herb, the scholar asked for a research budget. He would need a lot of books and to consult with other academicians and explorers to determine if the whole matter was feasible. The enthused warrior gladly handed over sacks of gold coin, and in due course Herb was called upon to report his progress. The sage was enthusiastic: "Good news, m'lord, good news! The moon in question has breathable air, according to some legends, these stemming from heroic myths regarding ancient adventurers' journeys to such places." Herb then said that the preparations for such a project must be clandestine, kept most secret. To this end he needed to construct a very large, barn-like building, hire engineers and workmen, and stock up on materials.

When questioned about the device, the clever scholar would only wink and shake his head. "You'll know soon enough, noble master. I prefer to keep this absolutely covert until the very end." Not wanting to argue with the genius, Robilar agreed.

There followed several game months during which the doughty fighter went forth to locate rich treasure, all of which and more Herb demanded so as to continue his research.

As the funds available for the work began to dwindle, Robilar finally demanded to see the device. After some hesitation, Herb agreed. In a week it would be ready, and then not only could Lord Robilar see the machine, he could go forth on his amazing voyage to the moon.

So in the appointed time, the great moment was at hand. Robilar entered the vast structure and saw there the mightiest catapult ever constructed. The sage was dumbfounded when Robilar not only refused to see if the device would work as Herb thought it would, but scrapped the whole project.

There is a mixed message contained in this. It is not usually difficult for a DM to flummox players who are bent on the really unusual when they fondly think they have cozened the Dungeon Master. The confounding can be double-edged, however. In fact I had wanted to encourage the players to take to space and explore and adventure on the moon in question. After Herb's fiasco, though, not a single player would consider the idea. Thus the place was never visited. Touché, Robilar. D

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KALMAN

Swashbucklers

Campaign Components:

Flashing Blades and Rapier Wit in any D&D Game

By Travis Stout · illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky and Steve Garcia

Loading up with heavy weapons, armor, and spells of mass destruction to march into a dank, dark monster pit in search of loot is always an entertaining way to spend an evening around the gaming table. The D&D game is built around this very concept, but what happens when fighters trade their full plate for pantaloons and their greatswords for rapiers? What happens when the rogue stops skulking in shadows and disarming traps and puts on a feathered hat and tumbles about the battlefield with blades akimbo? The answer is simple: You have swashbucklers on your hands.

For some players and DMs, swashbucklers are merely a pleasant diversion from the hulking warrior, the sagely wizard, or the sly rogue. But for those who want to build more swashbuckling elements into their campaign or character, this article tells you what you need to know.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SWASHBUCKLING

The word "swashbuckler" comes from a combination of the words "swash," meaning to make a loud noise, and "buckler," which as we all know is a small, round shield. That might be the literal definition of "swashbuckler," but over time the word has come to symbolize a dashing, quick-witted hero, often lightly armed and armored, who engages his foes both with his mastery of swordsmanship and with his razor-sharp wit. Most swashbuckling adventures take place in cities, but swashbucklers are equally at home on the high seas, riding with merchant caravans, or traveling as emissaries to distant lands.

FOR PLAYERS

The following sections detail various options for players wishing to partake in swashbuckling adventure, including discussions on roleplaying a swashbuckler, suggestions for character races and classes, and even new uses for skills, new feats, rules for parrying, and some new equipment.

Honor and Prestige

In most swashbuckling stories, characters possess a strong sense of honor and a burning desire to increase their own prestige. This concept of honor is not the strict, honest code of the paladin; instead, it is more akin to a combination of personal dignity, prestige, and dueling prowess. Both a paladin and a swashbuckler might be offended by accusations of lying, as lying is both dishonorable and undignified, but while a paladin would likely accept the apology of a man who inadvertently trips him and sends him sprawling in the mud, a swashbuckler would just as likely become irate and challenge the man to a duel.

By winning duels, wooing members of the opposite sex in particularly

impressive ways, and accomplishing great deeds of heroism, swashbucklers seek to make names for themselves that are known and respected (or perhaps feared) throughout the world. Less honorable swashbucklers might lie or invent elaborate tales of their own prowess, but such idle braggarts rarely last long, as they are invariably challenged to duels by skilled fencers who wish to improve their own reputation by defeating dangerous foes.

To tie these diverse and rather confusing elements together, swashbucklers follow their own elaborate codes of honor. Swashbuckling codes share a few common elements: how the swashbuckler responds to challenges (and how he or she issues them), expected appearance, interaction with the opposite sex, and the giving of and responding to insults are the four pillars of the swashbuckler's code. Although the codes vary widely, and some contain more or less than these four elements, the vast majority of swashbuckling codes address these four issues.

Below are three examples of swashbuckler codes, ranging from informal rules of conduct for a dueling society to a rigid, formal oath taken by a cadre of royal guards. Players can adopt these for their swashbuckling characters or use them as a baseline to create their own.

A Swashbuckler's Personal Code: "My name is Giuseppe d'Alarand, a bard of no little repute, and I have sworn to follow these edicts in my grand quest for adventure and riches: I shall accept any challenge of which I deem myself worthy, though those be few and far between. I shall offer challenges of my own should I be grievously slighted—I shall not resort to steel for a spilled ale, but should any man or woman belittle me or ridicule me in public, they shall taste my blade. No matter how grim my situation or how ill my temper, I shall always be ready with a song or a poem for the ladies who might catch my eye. I swear moreover to never break the heart of a woman. Verbal witticism is to be preferred over the clash of steel, and thus any insult to myself shall be returned in kind until the cad acknowledges my mastery of the spoken word. Any man or woman who impugns my family, especially my sister Rosaline, shall taste my blade without benefit of a true challenge."

Dueling Society Code of Conduct: You shall always strive to perfect the art of dueling. You must never refuse an honorable challenge, but if the challenger has proven to be honorless, the challenge may be refused. All challenges, whether issued or accepted, must be met; failure to do so will result your being branded a coward and expelled from the society. If circumstances prevent you from reaching the site of the duel at the appropriate time, you must send a second in your place. Your appearance reflects upon the status of the society, and to dress poorly dishonors it: At all times, you shall appear dressed neatly and in the highest-quality clothing you can afford with finery appropriate to the occasion. Damaged or soiled apparel must be discarded and replaced as soon as possible, and all visible wounds must be cleanly bandaged and covered. A swashbuckler should be quick of wit as well as blade: You should always be ready with charming words and deeds for the wooing of lords or ladies. To force your interests upon the object of your affection is both uncouth and low: If the party in question does not warm to your wooing, woo harder. A true swashbuckler never accepts an insult: If you feel you have been slighted in any way, you must challenge the offending party to a duel. When you feel the need to insult another, do so with wit and biting commentary, not crude profanities or slurs. Conduct yourself in these ways, and you shall represent your society with honor.

The Oath of the King's Guards: "I, [insert name here], do hereby swear on this Royal Sword that I shall conduct myself in a manner commensurate with my status as a representative of the Throne. I shall accept the challenges of honorable duelists, provided such challenges do not conflict with my duties to the king. If either my honor or that of my liege is insulted in so grievous a way as to demand restitution, I shall challenge the slanderer to a duel at the earliest possible opportunity. Unless dictated otherwise by the nature of my mission, I shall wear the uniform of my service with pride, keeping in mind that my appearance reflects upon His Majesty's honor as well as my own. I shall always stand ready to help my fellow guards, for we are an elite family of soldiers with the highest calling in the land. These things I swear, in the name of [insert nation here] and Almighty [insert patron deity here]."

Wenching and Louting

Whether male or female, most swashbucklers are great flirts, and many regard a man or woman who can compose a witty love song or sonnet almost as highly as a master fencer—of course, the master fencer who can compose a sonnet is held in even higher regard. In swashbuckling adventures, the heroes have an uncanny knack for causing others to fall head over heels for them, and those hapless men and women have an uncanny knack for being kidnapped or otherwise placed in danger. Of course, not all swashbucklers are shameless flirts—just as many have one true love to whom they swear undying loyalty, and these one true loves have an even greater knack for being kidnapped than the dalliances of more flirtatious swashbucklers. The wooing of a potential love interest can be done through roleplaying, but some DMs and players might feel uncomfortable with this, and so the Skills and Feats section includes rules for seduction and flirtation using Charisma-based skills.

Character Classes

Different character classes approach swashbuckling in different ways. A swashbuckling fighter specializing in the rapier differs from a flamboyant wizard with flashy spells. Each character class and how it fits into a swashbuckling campaign is outlined below, along with sample character archetypes to inspire you when you create your swashbuckling character. Even in non-swashbuckling campaigns, the archetypes described below offer a wealth of character ideas.

Barbarian

Barbarian swashbucklers tend to prefer the earthier pursuits of the swashbuckling lifestyle, including drinking, feasting, and louting or wenching. They seldom care for the effete pursuits of poetry, chamber music, or ballroom dancing. While they might be

HONORABLE AND INSULTING RULES

Dragon Magazine #299 introduced the first "Campaign Components" article, "Campaign Components: Knights." That article presented the honor point system as a way to measure a knight's honor and gave rules for how a knight's honor can affect game play. The honor point system is an excellent way to measure a swashbuckling PCs' honor, and personalizing it by designing new elements can be a great way to create a unique swashbuckling code. "Adding Injury to Insults" from *Dragon Magazine* #294 gave a system for using insults and wit to diminish a foe's social standing. The rules in that article provide a great way for players of swashbuckling characters to get in the spirit and an excellent way to add swashbuckling flavor to campaign. If you plan on using either or both of these systems for your character or campaign, consider integrating the two sets of rules, allowing insults to lower a characters honor point score in a particular category.

looked upon as boors by some of their fellows, few can match the courage and the heart of the barbarian swashbuckler.

The Curious Savage: This character has been taken from her native culture (either through slavery or by well-meaning friends) and brought into the swashbucklers' world to be "civilized." She might reject such attempts, opting to retain her tribal heritage and adapt it to life in the big city, or she might embrace her new life wholeheartedly, trying to forget that she once lived such a primitive life. Mani, from the film *Brotherhood of the Wolf,* is a prime example of the curious savage.

Recommended Prestige Classes: King/queen of the wild (*Masters of the Wild*); tribal protector (*Sword and Fist*); ancestral avenger (*Dragon Magazine* #279: "Class Acts").

Recommended Skills: Climb, Handle Animal, Listen, Intimidate, Jump, Ride, Swim, Wilderness Lore.

Recommended Feats: Mounted Combat, Skill Focus (any of the recommended skills), Track.

Goals: Many curious savages seek to return to their homes, but just as many decide they want to try to fit in with civilized society. These savages often spend skill points on Knowledge skills or Charisma-based skills to make themselves seem less crude and help them fit in. Deep down, though, all curious savages retain the heart of a barbarian.

The Passionate Rager: Like Porthos from *The Three Musketeers,* this character is not truly a "barbarian" in the sense of being from a primitive culture. Rather, he is a man consumed by his passions, driven into furious battle-rages, great bouts of eating and drinking, and firey romance.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Duelist (*Sword and Fist*); frenzied berserker (*Masters of the Wild*).

Recommended Skills: Climb, Jump, Ride, Swim. The passionate rager should consider spending 2 skill points to counteract his class-based illiteracy.

Recommended Feats: Cleave, Great

Cleave, Power Attack; Destructive Rage, Dwarf's Toughness, Intimidating Rage (*Masters of the Wild*).

Goals: Passionate ragers are not generally united by overarching goals. Some, whose rage is fueled by some terrible injustice in their past (such as the murder of a loved one), are driven by a thirst for vengeance, but most are simply trying to make their way as best as they can in a world they find constrictive.

Bard

Swashbuckling bards gravitate toward the courtly aspects of swashbuckling life. Writing songs and poetry, dancing, and genteel wooing are the bard's forte. Leave the seedy alehouses and taverns to others, the bard prefers fine wines,

elegant music, and witty company. A duel of wits is preferable to a duel of blades, and few swashbuckling bards would dare to be seen in last year's fashions. While such fripperies (the bard would call them "refined tastes") might make the bard seem to be nothing more than a dandy, they can fight with the best of them. With their respectable base attack bonus, excellent range of skills, and selection of personal-enhancement spells, bards can make for fierce foes in a duel.

The Wag: This bard is the ultimate realization of the phrase "the pen is mightier than the sword." Depending upon the character, the wag might be a celebrated courtesan admired for her charm and respected for her intellect, or she might be a peasant or merchant who espouses her radical views in the cafés and taverns. The French philosopher Voltaire is an example of a wag.

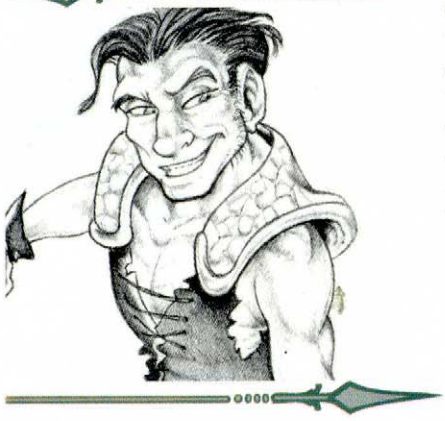
Recommended Prestige Classes: Loremaster.

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (any), Perform (oratory, satire), Sense Motive.

Recommended Feats: Skill Focus (any Knowledge skill, Perform); Persuasive, Trustworthy, Jack of All Trades (*Song and Silence*); Scathing Wit (*Dragon Magazine* #291: "Study and Jest").

Goals: The wag is primarily concerned with convincing others that her views, whether political, social, or otherwise, are correct. She adventures to gain prestige and recognition from the masses—after all, the commoners listen to famous people more than some stranger in a bar.

The Storymaker: Not content with merely telling stories, this swashbuckler seeks to create his own legends of heroism and romance. One day he'll retire



and share his stories with audiences left wide-eyed in disbelief at his grand tales, but until then every day is an opportunity for a new adventure. The storymaker has an excellent memory for details (and a just-as-excellent knack for distorting them), and he probably carries a journal to record his exploits. If you need someone to make being trapped in quicksand, set on fire, and swallowed whole by a great red wyrm seem like a cunning plan and a triumphant victory, the storymaker is the person to call. Sinbad the Sailor is an example of a storymaker.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Dungeon delver, royal explorer, virtuoso (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (any), Perform (storytelling, epic, saga), Ride, Speak Language (any).

Recommended Feats: Artist, Luck of Heroes, Saddleback, Smooth Talk (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*); Multicultural, Persuasive (*Song and Silence*).

Goals: The storymaker, unsurprisingly, is driven by the desire to create a grand epic (or perhaps several epics) that will make his name famous until the end of time.

Cleric

Clerics are often priests of gods of adventure or luck. The appearance of a priest can be a powerful tool for intimidation and motivation. Less scrupulous clerics often give their blessings to other swashbucklers' exuberant ways, effectively giving drinking and fighting an air of legitimacy.

Priests, particularly corrupt ones, are classic swashbuckling villains. With an aura of holiness about them, priests are rarely suspected of being the masterminds behind the evil schemes the PCs thwart. High-ranking priests have access to a considerable array of church resources with which to fund their plots and foil their enemies, and even once the PCs unearth the truth, proving that the Archbishop is trying to kill the king and claim the throne can be a difficult prospect.

The Would-Be Redeemer: This well-meaning priest travels with a rowdy band of swashbucklers in the hopes of convincing them that their habits are wicked and will get them into trouble with the gods. Almost always following a lawful good or lawful neutral religion, the would-be redeemer lectures her more rambunctious companions on the proper way to behave. The would-be redeemer can add an element of comic relief to the campaign, provided her attitude isn't over-played. Friar Tuck, as he was portrayed in the 1938 Errol Flynn version of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, is a would-be redeemer.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Contemplative, divine oracle (*Defenders of the Faith*); divine disciple, heirophant (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*).

Recommended Skills: Diplomacy, Intimidate, Knowledge (religion), Perform (oratory).

Recommended Feats: Skill Focus (Diplomacy, Perform [oratory]); Persuasive (*Song and Silence*).

Goals: The would-be redeemer's goal is, of course, to convince her companions to return to the straight and narrow path. Needless to say, in a swashbuckling campaign, the would-be redeemer is often a very frustrated individual.

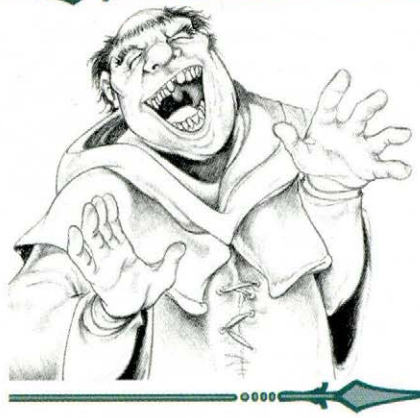
The Rowdy Priest: The opposite of the would-be redeemer, the rowdy priest travels with swashbucklers because he thoroughly enjoys it. The rowdy priest is often a worshipper of a god of adventure, luck, or heroism, and is most often chaotic good. Although he

enjoys drinking, fighting, and all the other activities common to a swashbuckling life, he remains a devout follower of his god, and he often tries to convert people he meets to his religion. Of course, since his religion involves a lot of gambling, carousing, and fighting, converts come easy.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Consecrated harrier, holy liberator (*Defenders of the Faith*); divine champion (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Jump, Knowledge (religion), Perform (oratory), Tumble.

Recommended Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Endurance; Divine Vigor (*Defenders of the Faith*); Acrobatic, Persuasive (*Song and Silence*).



Goals: The rowdy priest tries to live up to his god's example in all cases. He adventures not merely for glory or riches, but also to win converts to his religion and exemplify his deity's teachings.

Druid

At first glance, the druid might seem ill suited to a swashbuckling campaign. A

druid's powers relate to nature and the outdoors, while most swashbuckling campaigns take place in cities, and the druid's class skill list runs somewhat counter to the swashbuckling archetype. Naturally, this shouldn't stop anyone from playing a druid in a swashbuckling game.

Druids in a swashbuckling campaign tend to be esoteric figures, with knowledge and powers not fully understood by mainstream society. In many ways, they are similar to barbarians in that they provide a valuable outsider's perspective to a swashbuckling campaign. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to a druidic swashbuckler is the typical druid's aversion to cities; to remedy this, the druid might befriend urban animals such as rats, stray dogs, and pigeons as his animal companions and become a sort of urban druid. With their powerful nature and weather magic, druids are sometimes found on ships, listening to the wind to learn of approaching storms and fighting against the depredations of undersea monsters like sahuagin.

The Sea Druid: Sea druids, much like their landbound cousins, fight to preserve the balance of nature. Sea druids, however, know that nature doesn't stop at the shoreline—there is another world both above and below the waves. Sea druids are often found as navigators on ships, and they make ideal characters for a piratical swashbuckling campaign. When interpreted into D&D terms, the Sea Folk Windfinders from *The Wheel of Time* could be seen as examples of sea druids.

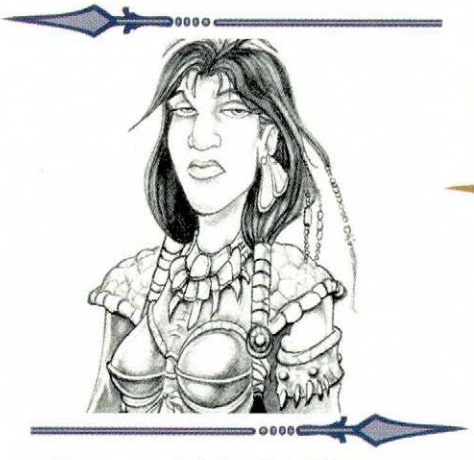
Recommended Prestige Classes: Dread pirate (*Song and Silence*); king/queen of the sea (*Masters of the Wild*).

Recommended Skills: Balance, Climb, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (nature), Profession (sailor), Swim, Use Rope, Wilderness Lore.

Recommended Feats: Dodge, Endurance, Mobility, Skill Focus (Intuit Direction, Profession [sailor]); Sea Legs, (*Oriental Adventures*).

Goals: The sea druid loves the fresh air and open water of the sea. When out on the open ocean, she strives to show others nature's beauty or teach them to fear its power. Her adventures might include halting whaling or fishing activities that threaten certain species, stopping sahuagin from raiding coastal towns, or recovering sunken cargo ships that contain magical or alchemical substances that might be dangerous to oceangoing life.

The Miracle Maker: Making his first appearance in the classic film *The Princess Bride,* the miracle maker is a hermit, sometimes kept on retainer by a monarch, with a knack for performing healing, resurrection, and other divine "miracles." Although sometimes mistaken for hedge wizards, miracle makers are druids, drawing their power from trees and plants, specially mixed and prepared according to ancient and secret formulae.



Recommended Prestige Classes: Hospitaler (*Defenders of the Faith*); hierophant (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*).

Recommended Skills: Alchemy, Heal, Knowledge (nature), Profession (herbalist).

Recommended Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Skill Focus (any recommended skills).

Goals: Miracle makers have to gain experience and make a name for themselves before they can relax into the life of a hermit on retainer. Villainous miracle makers might take up the path of the poisoner to gain infamy, while virtuous miracle makers travel the world trying to convince others of the value of their ministrations.

Fighter

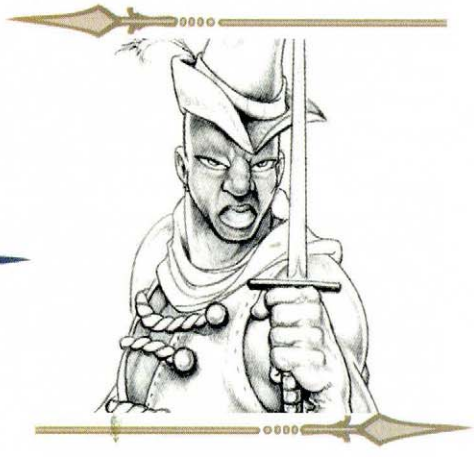
If you want the ultimate fencer, look no farther than the fighter. With a high base attack bonus and a slew of bonus feats, the fighter is the only character class that has a chance of mastering multiple fencing styles. Unfortunately, the fighter's advantage of proficiency with medium and heavy armors is often less useful in a swashbuckling game, and the fighter suffers from a significant lack of skill points and class skills.

The Master Fencer: Obsessed with perfecting the art of swordplay, the master fencer studies as many fighting styles as he can. The master fencer is a fearsome foe for any character, but he is one of the best people to have on your side in a fight. Inigo Montoya from *The Princess Bride* is a prime example of this archetype.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Duelist, weapon master (*Sword and Fist*); blade dancer (*Oriental Adventures*).

Recommended Skills: Balance, Bluff, Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Tumble.

Recommended Feats: Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Mobility, Spring Attack.



Goals: As the name suggests, the master fencer's primary goal is to master the art of fencing. To this end, they often travel the world in search of worthy opponents to fight and learn from and new fencing styles to study.

The Musketeer: One of the biggest possible changes from standard D&D in a swashbuckling campaign is the

existence of firearms. The musketeer is a soldier specifically trained to use black powder weapons in battle and to fight with a sword or bayonet once she is out of ammunition. She is usually attached to an army, but some musketeers, perhaps the forerunners of Old West gunslingers, are independent operatives.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Arcane archer; order of the bow initiate (*Sword and Fist*); deepwood sniper (*Masters of the Wild*).

Recommended Skills: Alchemy, Craft (gunsmith), Listen, Spot.

Recommended Feats: Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Point Blank Shot, Far Shot, Shot on the Run, Precise Shot, Mounted Combat, Mounted Archery, Dodge, Mobility, Quick Draw; Sharp-Shooting, Rapid Reload, Zen Archery (*Sword and Fist*); Deflect Ranged Attack, Ranged Disarm, Ranged Pin, Ranged Sunder (*Dragon Magazine* #274: "Wolfsheads").

Monk

While not many of the classic swashbuckling stories feature monk-like characters, the monk fits well into this genre. They prefer to go unarmored, they carry light weapons, and they perform fantastic stunts on a regular basis. Their disciplined, ascetic codes tend to clash with those of most swashbucklers (although drunken masters are a notable exception), but this merely means that they are unlikely to go drinking and carousing with their comrades.

The Questing Monk: The questing monk has traveled far from his home monastery on some sort of mission. He might be looking for a lost relic sacred to his order, or he might be seeking information about the soldiers who destroyed her home and killed her fellow monks. Questing monks are often serious, driven characters consumed by the importance of their mission and totally focused on accomplishing it. Kwai Chang Caine, the protagonist of the TV series *Kung Fu*, is an example of a questing monk.

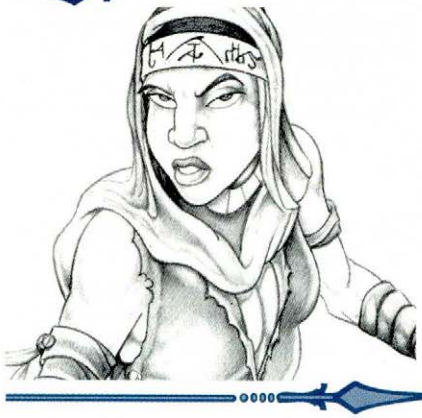
Recommended Prestige Classes: Ghostwalker, red avenger (*Sword and Fist*); shintao monk, tattooed monk, Henshin mystic (*Oriental Adventures*); sacred fist (*Defenders of the Faith*).

Recommended Skills: Balance, Climb, Concentration, Escape Artist, Gather Information, Intimidate, Jump, Move Silently, Search, and Tumble.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Expertise, Whirlwind Attack; Extra Stunning Attacks, Feign Weakness, Lightning Fists, Mantis Leap, Snatch Arrows (*Sword and Fist*); Defensive Strike, Fists of Iron, Improved Aid, Prone Attack (*Oriental Adventures*).

Goals: The questing monk's goal is to accomplish his mission. Depending on the exact nature of his quest, accomplishing this goal could take her on all manner of adventures. Naturally, even while he is on his sacred mission, the questing monk seeks to gain experience and improve his abilities whenever and wherever he can.

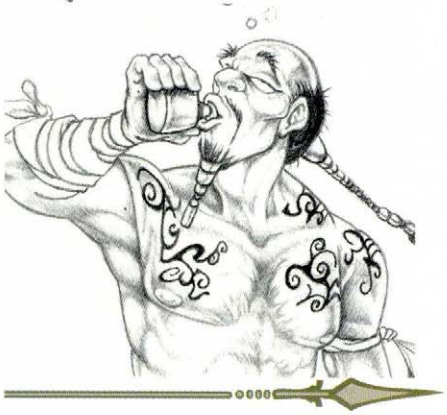
The Drunken Master: Practitioners of the Drunken Boxing style of martial arts, the drunken masters choose to reject the ascetic values of most monastic orders, instead using alcohol to unlock their greatest powers. Drunken masters are often surly and irritable when sober, but once they have a few drinks in them, they become boisterous and cheerful, although they are always ready for a fight.



Recommended Prestige Class: Drunken master (*Sword and Fist*).

Recommended Skills: Balance, Climb, Hide, Move Silently, Tumble.

Recommended Feats: Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Cleave, Power Attack; Extra Stunning Attacks, Feign Weakness, Lightning Fists, Mantis Leap, Snatch Arrows (*Sword and Fist*); Choke Hold, Earth's Embrace, Improved Grapple (*Oriental Adventures*).



Goals: Drunken masters, like most monks, adventure to test and improve their martial prowess—although in the case of the drunken master, finding a good, rollicking fight is often high on her list of priorities. Because of their imbibed nature, potions are often of great interest to drunken masters as well, many of whom attempt to replicate the effects of various potions with a combination of alcohol and their own *ki*.

Paladin

Noble and virtuous, paladins exemplify all that is honorable and good—of course, that doesn't mean they can't drink, fight, and woo with the best of them. Swashbuckling paladins are much like a blend between the swashbuckling fighter and cleric. The stereotypical "knight in shining armor" is uncommon in swashbuckling campaigns, but paladins can thrive just as well when wearing light armor and carrying rapiers. Depending on the campaign, swashbuckling paladins might be independent "lone wolves," members of a church-funded hierarchy, or sworn to serve a noble secular ruler.

The Church Agent: Church agents serve as the envoys, diplomats, and general representatives of their faiths. The ideal church agent is skilled in diplomacy and negotiation, but when words fail, the

church agent is fully prepared to defend herself and the interests of her church.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Divine champion, divine seeker (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*); consecrated harrier, hospitaler, templar (*Defenders of the Faith*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Ride, Sense Motive, Spot.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw; Divine Might, Divine Vigor, Divine Cleansing (*Defenders of the Faith*); Persuasive, Trustworthy (*Song and Silence*).

Goals: The church agent's goals are those of her faith and, more specifically, the missions upon which she is sent. The church agent can take on missions ranging from negotiating peace treaties to clearing out and destroying temples dedicated to evil deities.

The Bodyguard: Assassination plots are common storylines in swashbuckling campaigns. The bodyguard makes it his business to ensure that these assassinations fail and that his charge is always safe from danger.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Dwarven defender; devoted defender (*Sword and Fist*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Innuendo, Intimidate, Listen, Spot, Search, Sense Motive.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Toughness; Defensive Strike, Improved Aid (*Oriental Adventures*).

Goals: The bodyguard's goal is a simple one: Keep his charge alive. This doesn't always mean going everywhere his charge goes and acting like her shadow—wise bodyguards make a point

to know the area in which they will be expected to protect their charges, and they often travel alone (or with a group) to learn the lay of the land, set up safe houses, and so forth. Royal bodyguards are often sent on delicate missions by their king or queen, acting as diplomats, spies, or general troubleshooters.

Ranger

While the ranger faces many of the same problems as the druid in a swashbuckling campaign, *Masters of the Wild* presents a variant ranger class, the urban ranger, which fits in marvelously. Swashbuckling urban rangers often find themselves drawn to roles that make the most use of their ability to track and capture their opponents. Furthermore, the ranger's unquestioned mastery of two-weapon fighting makes him an ideal candidate for mastery of the rapier and dagger fencing style described later.

The Bounty Hunter: Bounty hunters are those who choose to hunt the most dangerous game in the world—other sentient beings. Equally adept at hounding their quarries through trackless wilderness and through crowded city streets, bounty hunters usually carry a startling array of weapons designed to

capture and subdue their prey: nets, bolas, tanglefoot bags, and *entangle* spells are all common gear among bounty hunters.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Shadow scout (*Oriental Adventures*); bloodhound, foe hunter (*Masters of the Wild*); consecrated harrier (*Defenders of the Faith*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot.

Recommended Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bola, net), Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Run, Track; Stealthy (*Song and Silence*); Shadow (*Masters of the Wild*).

Goals: Bounty hunters work on contracts. Once the target has been located and captured (or killed, depending on the contract), the cycle begins anew. When not working on a contract, good-aligned bounty hunters sometimes take on jobs for free to help the peasantry. Evil bounty hunters might turn their skills toward larcenous pursuits.

The Constable: Most swashbuckling campaigns take place in a setting resembling earth's Renaissance period (although in a fantasy setting, this might be as much a magical awakening as a scientific one). New methods of locating criminals are beginning to appear, both technical and mystical, and the constable is at the forefront of them. Almost all constables are attached to city police forces or town guards, but a few operate independently, usually in areas where there is no formally organized law enforcement. Ichabod Crane, from Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*, is a constable.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Bloodhound, watch detective (*Masters of the Wild*); vigilante (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Disguise, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Knowledge (local), Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot.

Recommended Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (any recommended skill), Track; Shadow (*Masters of the Wild*).

Goals: Constables adventure primarily to bring peace and order to the world, or at least their little portion of it. When not actively engaged in a criminal investigation, the constable often tries to independently collect

information about underworld activities within his precinct. Constables also work undercover frequently, trying to bring down thieves' guilds from within.

Rogue

While virtually every swashbuckler would do well to take a few levels of rogue, pure rogues are certainly nothing to sneeze at in a swashbuckling campaign. Rogues, along with fighters and bards, are one of the three classes best suited to the swashbuckling lifestyle. Every skill important to the swashbuckler is on their class skill list, and all their class abilities are geared toward fighting and acting effectively in light armor and with light weapons. Swashbuckling rogues are generally more inclined to be nimble bandits, pirates, or outlaws as opposed to skulking burglars, but there is ample room for either type in a swashbuckling campaign.

The Outlaw: Whether living in the greenwood and swooping down on caravans or hiding in the heart of a grand city, the outlaw is a classic figure of swashbuckling literature.

Outlaws are rarely common thieves or burglars; more often the swashbuckling outlaw prefers to make flashy, daring raids against his chosen target, and she almost always leaves a calling card at the scene so that the populace knows who was responsible. Robin Hood, Zorro, and the Scarlet Pimpernel are all classic examples of outlaw swashbucklers.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Dread pirate, outlaw of the crimson road, vigilante (*Song and Silence*); guild thief (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*).

Recommended Skills: Appraise, Bluff, Climb, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Gather Information, Heal, Hide, Intimidate, Move Silently, Open Lock, Spot, Wilderness Lore.

Recommended Feats: Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Far Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run, Quick Draw, Run; Dash, Stealthy (*Song and Silence*); Shadow (*Masters of the Wild*).

Goals: In general, the goals of outlaws can be broken down into two categories: seeking monetary gain or fighting injustice.

The Mysterious Warrior: No one knows who he is, or where he came from, but this mysterious character crops up in swashbuckling lore quite often. Some are characters with a mysterious past, like the Man in the Iron Mask, and others take on an alter ego to protect their identities or instill fear, such as Don Diego de la Vega (better known as Zorro), or the Dread Pirate Roberts from *The Princess Bride*. A mix of fighter and rogue levels is often the best choice for the mysterious warrior.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Shadowdancer; ghostwalker, duelist (*Sword and Fist*); dread pirate, spymaster, and vigilante (*Song and Silence*).

Recommended Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Escape Artist, Forgery, Innuendo, Intimidate, Hide, Sense Motive.

Recommended Feats: Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Expertise Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Initiative; Multicultural, Persuasive, Charlatan, Dash (*Song and Silence*).

Goals: The mysterious warrior keeps her goals a closely guarded secret, but she often has a vendetta of some sort, whether it be to atone for some past crime or to get revenge for some grievous wrong committed against her. Some mysterious warriors have a streak of outlaw in them and conceal their identities to fight evil and tyranny with less risk to themselves and their loved ones.

Sorcerers and Wizards

When they aren't serving as mysterious sages, sorcerers and wizards often develop their own swashbuckling culture in parallel with their non-arcane brethren. In this culture, *magic missiles* and *flame arrows* take the place of rapiers and daggers, and a well-timed counterspell is far more valuable than a bit of clever swordplay.

The Arcane Duelist: With precious few exceptions, sorcerers and wizards are more skilled with spells than they are with swords. Why then, the arcane duelist asks, should swashbuckling wizards try to shoehorn themselves into dueling with pointy bits of metal? Arcane duelists have honed the art of the magical duel into as civilized an art as fencing, replacing thrust and parry with spell and counterspell and feint and riposte with disguised spells and quickened spells. Sorcerers and wizards are equally represented in the ranks of arcane duelists, with sorcerers having a slight edge in flexibility and wizards having the edge in spell selection. Special rules for mageduels can be found in *Magic of Faerûn,* but arcane dueling can be resolved just as easily with normal combat rules.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Incantatrix, mage-killer, war wizard (*Magic of Faerûn*); arcane trickster, ele-

mental savant, mage of the arcane order (*Tome and Blood*).

Recommended Skills: Alchemy, Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), Spellcraft.

Recommended Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Empower Spell, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (Evocation, Abjuration, or Conjuration); Chain Spell, Energy Admixture, Energy Substitution, Eschew Materials, Twin Spell (*Tome and Blood*); Improved Counterspell (*Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*); Reactive Counterspell, Spell Thematics (*Magic of Faerûn*).

Goals: Arcane duelists generally have the same goals as their fencing counterparts—to prove themselves to be the best duelists they can be. To this end, they often adventure in search of new magic and lost spells with which to surprise their opponents.

Mystic Fencer: The mystic fencer is a master of blending the arts of magic and dueling into one seamless style. She tends to favor personal enhancement spells like *bull's strength* and *cat's grace* over overtly hostile magic like *fireball*. With the proper spells and magic items, the mystic fencer can protect herself better than most armored fighters, and she can accomplish feats of acrobatics that other fencers can only dream about. Most mystic fencers are either multiclassed fighter/sorcerers or fighter/wizards. Li Mu Bai, from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, is a prime example of a mystic fencer.

Recommended Prestige Classes: Duelist, weapon master (*Sword and Fist*), spellsword (*Tome and Blood*).

Recommended Skills: Balance, Bluff, Concentration, Jump, Spellcraft, Tumble.

Recommended Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Weapon Focus, Weapon Finesse, Quicken Spell, Still Spell; Eschew Materials, Persistent Spell (*Tome and Blood*).

Goals: Mystic fencers have a rather challenging goal before them—they have to improve not only their martial talents, but their mystical ones as well. Thus, they usually try to travel in the company of both warriors and spellcasters to observe and learn from the fighting styles of others.

Swashbucklers of Various Races

Humans do not have a monopoly on swashbuckling—in some campaigns, they might not even have a majority! Members of other races also take up the mantle of the swashbuckler, albeit with varying degrees of frequency.

Humans

In many campaign settings, human innovation drives the world, in which case the entire swashbuckling ideal might have been a human invention. Humans have no real drawbacks when it comes to being swashbucklers, and their racial bonus feat and bonus skill points give them a tremendous edge in qualifying for fencing styles. Any of the sample archetypes presented in the class section are suitable for human swashbucklers.

Dwarves

At first blush, the concept of a dwarven swashbuckler might seem ridiculous. After all, dwarves are known for their long beards, boilerplate armor, and big axes. While it's true that dwarven culture is unlikely to produce a swashbuckling movement in most campaign settings, many dwarves who have left their mountain homes have been swept up in the swashbuckling lifestyle. Although they retain dwarven sensibilities (usually eschewing flamboyant clothing and flowery speech), dwarf swashbucklers often display surprising exuberance—particularly when well into their cups. Dwarven swashbucklers often continue using dwarven weapons like axes and hammers, though they tend to prefer the lighter, smaller versions of these weapons more suitable to swashbuckling fighting styles. Dwarven swashbucklers are often drawn to the bounty hunter and constable archetypes, and even non-barbarian dwarves can fit the curious savage archetype. Dwarven monks tend to favor the drunken master archetype.

Elves

If humans didn't invent swashbuckling, then the elves almost certainly did. Elves make excellent swashbucklers—one might argue that virtually all elven fighters are swashbucklers. Their natural grace and beauty, along with their love of life, make elves ideally suited to the dueling lifestyle. Elven swashbucklers favor light weapons that can be used with Weapon Finesse to take advantage of their high Dexterity scores. Many elven swashbucklers also favor outlandish exotic weapons like spiked chains and daishalars (see Weapons and Accessories), giving them an air of mystery. Elves are drawn to the mystic fencer archetype, generally preferring the bladesinger prestige class to the spellsword. Arcane duelists, master fencers, and mysterious warriors are also common among elves.

Gnomes

Despite their small stature, gnomes are swashbucklers par excellence. Their size makes them somewhat slower and weaker than other races, but it also makes them harder to hit and better at hitting their opponents. The typical gnome personality is also well suited to the swashbuckling style. Their love of witticisms and practical jokes makes them excellent wags and storymakers, and their creativity and inventiveness serves them well in any role. In many settings, gnomes were the first race to discover gunpowder and produce musketeers, which makes that archetype very common as well. Gnome fencers are, of course, restricted to using weapons appropriate to their size, and

because of their Strength penalty, they often make use of light weapons and the Weapon Finesse feat.

Half-Elves

Half-elven swashbucklers are a blend of their human and elven parents. Half elves can be found filling all manner of swashbuckling archetypes, but their elven heritage causes them to gravitate toward graceful, refined professions such as master fencers, church agents, and arcane duelists.

Half-Orcs

With their penalties to Intelligence and Charisma, it's very hard for a half-orc to become a witty, urbane fencer of refined taste, but even half-orcs have their place in swashbuckling campaigns. Almost all find themselves in the role of the curious savage, but a few whose loyalty can be bought are hired as bodyguards by nobles looking for some added muscle. Because it takes little brainpower to fire a musket, half-orcs are fairly common in the ranks of musketeers as well. Only a few half-orcs break the mold of their race to become classic swashbuckling archetypes like master fencers or storytellers, but a good-hearted half-orc might become a mysterious warrior if he thinks the people he's trying to help would hate or fear someone of orc descent.

Halflings

As the only other Small race, halflings gain the same benefits for their size as gnomes in a swashbuckling campaign. Halflings, however, have the added bonus of a +2 Dexterity bonus, which not only makes them even harder to hit, it helps them hit better when using the Weapon Finesse feat. A halfling master fencer with a pair of daggers can be a terror for an opponent expecting the little guy to go down easy. The halfling racial skill bonuses also dovetail nicely with swashbuckling skills, and their bonus on saves against fear effects epitomizes swashbuckling courage. The halfling personality, with its thirst for adventure and excitement, also meshes perfectly with the swashbuckling style. Halfling swashbucklers are usually flashy, flamboyant, and more than a little cocky. They tend to be drawn to archetypes such as the master fencer, outlaw, and questing monk.

Skills

A swashbuckling campaign, by its very nature, relies heavily upon the characters' skills, especially their social skills. After all, even the finest fencer in the land will be in hot water if he inadvertently tells the queen that her new gown makes her look like a rabid owlbear. Below are a few new ways to use your skills in a swashbuckling campaign.

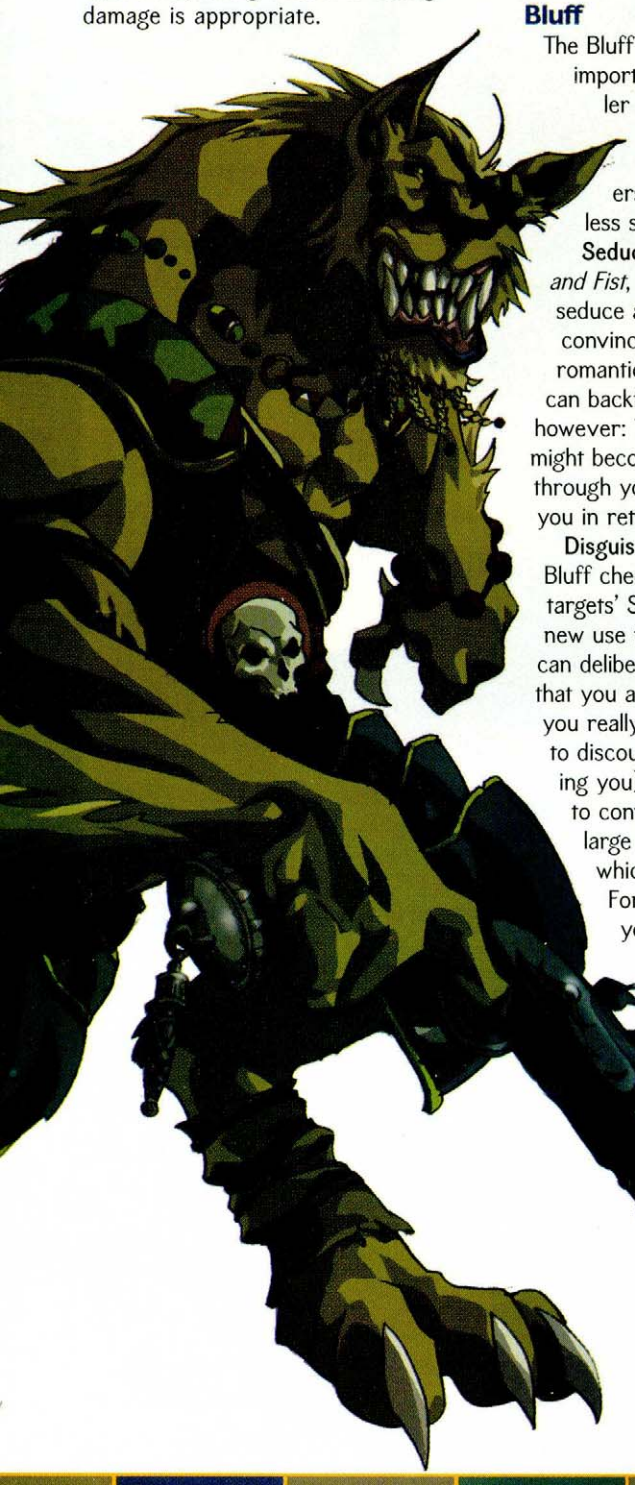
Balance

Balance is one of the key physical skills common in swashbuckling campaigns. From balancing atop a rolling barrel to keeping your footing while fighting on a tightrope, Balance covers a wide range of swashbuckling action.

Balance on a Rolling Barrel: "Log-rolling" to keep yourself on top of a rolling barrel, boulder, or similar round object and move about requires a DC 20 balance check. Failure means you fall off the object and land prone. A character log-rolling can move at normal speed and even double move, but any change in direction requires another Balance check. Rolling any faster than a double move (either by traveling down a slope or by taking the run action) increases the DC to 30.

Throw Someone Off-Balance: If you and an opponent are both standing on the same precarious surface that is susceptible to

swaying (such as a tightrope, a small rowboat, or a thin tree branch), you can attempt to rock the surface and knock your opponent off-balance by making an opposed Balance check as a move-equivalent action. The loser of the check is considered off-balance until his next action (opponents get a +2 to attack him, and he is denied his Dexterity bonus to AC). If the winner and loser differ by 5 or more, the loser falls, taking whatever falling damage is appropriate.



Stand in the Saddle: Standing up in your horse's saddle (often to grab a tree branch or balcony too high to reach while sitting) requires a Balance check (DC 15). If your mount is taking a double-move action, the DC is increased to 20, and if the mount is running, increase the DC to 25. This check can also be used to stand up on the roof of a speeding coach or any other moving, bouncing vehicle.

Bluff

The Bluff skill is one of the most important social skills a swashbuckler can have. Bluff allows you to feint in combat, to seduce people, and to convince others that you are either more or less skilled than you really are.

Seduction: As mentioned in *Sword and Fist*, the Bluff skill can be used to seduce an NPC of the opposite sex, convincing him or her that your romantic intentions are sincere. This can backfire in a number of ways, however: The target of your seduction might become obsessed with you or see through your deceptions and deceive you in return.

Disguise Your Skill: By making a Bluff check opposed by one or more targets' Sense Motive checks (see the new use for Sense Motive below), you can deliberately try to convince others that you are either more skilled than you really are (for example, in order to discourage opponents from attacking you), or less skilled (for example, to convince a gambler to wager a large sum on a contest of skill in which you have an advantage). For every 5 points by which you beat the opposed Sense Motive roll, you can convince someone you are one level higher or lower than you actually are. The precise advantage is left up to the DM, but it could include a +2 circumstance bonus to your first attack or skill check after making yourself out to be weaker in order to surprise someone, or a +2 circumstance bonus to Intimidate anyone who believes you are more skilled. This opposed skill check is separate from a creature's Sense Motive check to learn about you and is made after that roll succeeds (see Sense Motive, below). You cannot both disguise and hide your skill at the same time.

Hide Your Skill: The Sense Motive section describes how creatures can estimate the fighting prowess of others using that skill. When creatures wish to hide their skill to prevent others from knowing anything about them, they can make a Bluff check. The result of this roll replaces the base DC for the Sense Motive check if your check result is greater than the base DC.

Diplomacy

Although it sees less use than Bluff, Diplomacy is a useful skill to have if you want to impress your one true love or get advantageous conditions in a duel.

Wooing: While Bluff can be used to seduce a member of the opposite sex, Diplomacy should be used when you sincerely wish to woo a potential lover into returning your affection. Diplomacy allows you to adequately put into words your feelings for another character (although if you want to get poetic about it, you'd better have ranks in Perform, too).

Duel Negotiations: Diplomacy can also be used to negotiate terms for a duel in your favor rather than your opponent's. For example, you might bargain to have the duel take place in an area where you have many friends or allies in case things go badly, or you might manage to convince your opponent to duel with a weapon with which you are far more skilled.

Jump

In a swashbuckling campaign you might use the Jump skill to leap onto or off of a speeding horse or coach, to jump onto an opponent from above, or to vault over a wall.

Jump Onto a Moving Object: Jumping onto a moving horse or vehicle requires a readied action to jump when it passes by. The base DC of the Jump check is, of course, based on the minimum height you need to clear to land on the object (see the Jump skill description in the *Player's Handbook*), modified by the mount's or vehicle's speed. For every 5 feet of distance past 40 feet the mount or vehicle

moves during its action, add +1 to the DC. If you are leaping down onto the mount or vehicle from a height, the DC is 15 + the mount's or vehicle's speed modifier. Success indicates that you landed where you wished and reduced the effective height of the fall by 10 feet. Failure results in normal falling damage, and a failure by 5 or more results in missing the target of your jump.

Sense Motive

Sense Motive can be used to give a general sense of how skilled your opponent is. *Oriental Adventures* presented a similar system, and it could be used in place of this one if your DM prefers.

Gauge an Opponent's Strength: This skill can be used to gauge the approximate prowess of an opponent in battle. Making a DC 0 skill check is enough to discover whether or not a creature is more powerful than you, so long as the creature does not care if that information is known. Similarly, succeeding at a DC 15 skill check allows you to ascertain a fighting foe's level, and succeeding at a DC 25 skill check lets you know the creature's level, total attack bonus, and the damage it causes with a weapon it uses. When the creature is not fighting, your Sense Motive check suffers a -10 circumstance penalty. However, if the creature does not wish to allow others to know its power, it can convey false information or simply hide the information from you (see Bluff, above).

Tumble

The Tumble skill is one of the most important in the swashbuckler's repertoire. Aside from its obvious uses in avoiding attacks of opportunity, this skill governs most of the outrageous acrobatic stunts swashbucklers perform.

Wall Jump: If you are at least 5 feet away from a wall, you can roll a Tumble check (DC 20) to run up the wall 5 feet and backflip off of it. If you succeed at this check, you may roll a Jump check from the wall as if you had made a running jump. This stunt can help you reach a parapet you can't quite get to otherwise or flip right over your opponent's head.

Flip Up: A Tumble check (DC 25) can let a character flip up onto a ledge or balcony that is within arm's reach as a free action. Ordinarily, clambering up onto a ledge is a move-equivalent action that requires a Climb check.

The Chandelier Swing: A classic of the swashbuckling genre, swinging at an enemy on a chandelier requires a Tumble check (DC 15). If you succeed, you can swing up to the length of the rope or chain that holds the chandelier as a charge action, gaining all the normal benefits and penalties of charging. If the chandelier is secured by multiple ropes, you can't swing on it. Note that this Tumble check only covers swinging on the chandelier—if it isn't within arm's reach, you might need a Jump check to reach it.

Feats

The swashbuckler's repertoire of combat tricks is considerable, and he has no small number of feats to choose from. In particular, feats that relate to Dexterity, speed, combat effectiveness, or the skills important to a swashbuckler are appropriate choices. In addition to the existing choices, below are a few new feats specifically designed for a swashbuckling campaign.

Circle Master

You have mastered the techniques of the master's wheel and can focus on multiple opponents at once.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Circle Student, Concentration 2 ranks, base attack bonus +3.

Benefit: While in melee with the focus of your Dodge feat and using the Circle Student feat, you gain the benefits of the Circle Student feat against all the foes you threaten, and you do not suffer the normal penalty to your AC against their attacks. When attacked by creatures you do not threaten, you still suffer a -2 penalty to your AC against those attacks. Note that your dodge bonus from the Dodge feat still applies only to the focus of that feat. This feat can be chosen as a fighter bonus feat.

Circle Student

You have been trained in a master's wheel, a form of fencing instruction that grants you focus and control.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Concentration 1 rank.

Benefit: By focusing your perceptions on only one opponent, you reap benefits at the cost of your ability to defend against the attacks of others. When in melee with the foe you designate as the focus of your Dodge feat, you may choose to gain an additional +1 dodge bonus to your AC from attacks made by that creature and a +1 competence bonus to attacks against that foe. Unfortunately, during that round you

PARRYING FEATS

By Brent Phillips-Watts with Matthew Sernett

The D&D rules state that a round is equal to about 6 seconds of time. Clearly, a combatant can swing a sword more than once in 6 seconds, so the rules assume a certain amount of parrying and swordplay in every round. Parry rules were deliberately left out of the game for this reason and to speed up combat. Yet in the swashbuckling genre, the desperate parry is as much a part of the style of combat as a disarming stroke, and there's room in the round for more detailed fencing exchanges.

The ability to parry can be handled in two ways. Consider each of these options:

- **Everyone Can Parry:** Parrying is just another option for combat that anyone can use, like the ability to disarm a foe. All characters and creatures effectively have the Parry feat for free. This is probably the best choice for a swashbuckling campaign. Note that if all characters are granted the Parry feat for free, they must still meet all the requirements for feats that have the Parry feat's prerequisites. Thus, a character wishing to take Protective Parry must have the Expertise feat, and her Intelligence and Dexterity scores must be 13 or higher.
- **Parrying Requires a Feat:** The ability to parry requires that the character take the Parry feat. This is a good option for campaigns where the swashbuckling style is just one of many options or for an ongoing campaign where the swashbuckling style is being introduced for the first time.

In either case, these parrying rules can dramatically change the style of combat. In most D&D games, Armor Class and attack bonus are roughly equally valuable. Characters must choose between expending more resources on one or the other or try to expend resources on them equally. With these rules, a creature's attack bonus becomes a valuable resource for defense, encouraging characters to focus on their attack bonus and ignore their Armor Class. This suits a swashbuckling campaign well as it makes melee combat a more detailed and flashy affair, and it makes it more likely that characters will use light

suffer a -2 penalty to your AC against attacks by any other creature. This feat can be chosen as a fighter bonus feat.

Danger Sense

You have the uncanny ability to sense the presence of foes before they reveal themselves.

Prerequisites: Wis 15+, Alertness.

Benefit: When you would ordinarily be surprised, make a Wisdom check (DC 15). If you succeed, you may act in the surprise round as if you had not been surprised.

Kick Them While They're Down

You can attack an opponent who is attempting to stand up.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +3, Alertness.

Benefit: You may take an attack of opportunity when an opponent you threaten stands up from prone.

Normal: Standing up from prone does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Single Blade Style

You wield a single weapon well.

Prerequisites: Int 13+, Expertise, Weapon Focus (chosen weapon).

Benefit: When fighting with a weapon you have chosen for the Weapon Focus feat, wearing light armor or no armor, and with nothing in your off-hand, you gain a +2 dodge bonus to your AC. This feat can be chosen as a fighter bonus feat.

Snatch Weapon

You can snatch a weapon from a foe you've just disarmed.

Prerequisites: Int 13+, Expertise, Improved Disarm.

Benefit: When you disarm a foe, you can catch his weapon in your off hand, even if you disarmed your foe by using a weapon. Your off-hand must be empty to use this feat.

Normal: Your opponent's weapon only ends up in your grasp if you attempted to disarm him with an unarmed strike.

Fencing Styles

Almost as much as characters in kung-fu movies, swashbucklers are famous for having their own highly personalized styles of fighting. Often, a swashbuckler learns the secrets of these styles from a fencing master, who is almost always a famous figure in a swashbuckling campaign. Depending upon the master, his style might be open to anyone, or only to one or two chosen students. Dueling societies (see below) are often associated exclusively with one or two fencing styles, which can cause society rivalries to spill over into rivalries between practitioners of the fencing styles who have nothing to do with dueling societies. Presented below are four fencing styles for swashbucklers to master.

These styles are presented in the same format as martial arts styles from *Oriental Adventures*; if a character acquires all of the skills and feats associated with a style, she gains a special ability that reflects her mastery of the style.

Mercy's Blade

Mercy's blade teaches that true mastery of the sword comes not from the ability to kill, but the ability to end a fight without killing. This style is popular among paladins, clerics, and others who have an aversion to taking life.

Prerequisites: Str 13+, Int 13+, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus.

Benefit: You may deal subdual damage with no penalty to your attack roll, provided you are using a weapon for which you have the Weapon Focus feat. If you wish, you may take the -4 penalty anyways and gain a +4 bonus to damage.

Nimble Feet

Students of the nimble feet style strive to become like lightning with a sword. Where other styles focus on brute power or flashy moves, the nimble feet style teaches that speed and agility are paramount.

Prerequisites: Run, Dash (*Song and Silence*), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse, 5 or more ranks in Jump and Tumble.

Benefit: When you wear light or no armor, use the charge action, and attack with any weapon you can use with the Weapon Finesse feat, you may charge as though your base speed for the round were 10 feet greater.

Rapier and Dagger

One of the most popular fencing styles, rapier and dagger teaches, unsurprisingly, the use of the rapier and dagger in tandem. By practicing incessantly with both weapons, the fencer gains the ability to strike with lightning speed with both blades.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse

weapons and wear little armor. Campaigns that lack a swashbuckling atmosphere might find these rules less suitable.

Parry

You are skilled at deflecting the attacks of your enemies.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Expertise.

Benefit: After a melee attack roll to hit your character has been made, but before damage is assigned, you may attempt to parry the blow. You may only attempt to parry an attack against a weapon up to two size categories larger than the one you wield. Natural attacks are considered to be weapon two size categories smaller than the creature's size. You cannot parry an attack when unarmed, when wearing medium or heavy armor, or when you are denied your Dexterity bonus to AC. Attempting a parry uses up an attack of opportunity for the round. You may only make one parry attempt a round.

To parry, you must make a melee attack roll in an attempt to surpass the attack roll that you are trying to parry. When wielding a light weapon, you gain a +4 bonus to your parry roll. If you succeed, the attack fails and deals no damage. If you fail, the attack deals damage normally. In either case, making a parry attempt gives your opponent the opportunity to make a disarm attempt against the weapon you are parrying with. Attempting to disarm you is a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity, and failure does not allow you to make a disarm attempt in return.

Armored Fencer (Heavy)

You may parry when wearing heavy armor.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Armor Proficiency (Medium), Armor proficiency (Heavy), Armor Proficiency (Light), Armored Fencer (Medium), Expertise, Parry.

Benefit: You make parry attempts while wearing Heavy armor.

Normal: You must be wearing light or no armor to parry a blow.

Armored Fencer (Medium)

You may parry when wearing medium armor.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Armor Proficiency (Medium), Armor Proficiency (Light), Expertise, Parry.

Benefit: You make parry

SWASHBUCKLING WEAPONS

Item	Cost	Size	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Buckler*	—See *Player's Handbook*—						
Weapon grip*	—See below—						
Simple Weapons							
Quarterstaff*—See *Player's Handbook*—							
Martial Weapons							
Main-gauche*	4 gp	Tiny	1d4	19-20/x2	—	2 lb.	Piercing
Rapier, halfling*	15 gp	Small	1d4	18-20/x2	—	2 lb.	Piercing
Exotic Weapons							
Cloak, dueling*	10 gp	Small	1d3 §	x2	—	2 lb.	Bludgeoning
Daishalar	125 gp	Large	1d6/1d4	18-20/x2	—	6 lb.	Piercing
Pistol*	40	Small	1d6	18-20/x2	10 ft.	3 lb.	Piercing
Bullets, pistol (10)	1 gp					2 lb.	
Musket*	75	Medium-size	1d8	18-20/x2	50 ft.	10 lb.	Piercing
Bullets, rifle (10)	1 gp					2 lb.	

§ The weapon deals subdual damage rather than normal damage.
*See below for special rules.

(rapier), Weapon Finesse (dagger).

Benefit: When you make a full attack and attack with both a rapier and a dagger, you gain a +1 competence bonus to all your attack rolls during the round.

Fencer's Insight

While most fencing styles are nothing more than fighting techniques, fencer's insight teaches that to truly master your blade you must be able to anticipate your opponent's every move before he even decides what that move will be.

Prerequisites: Wis 15+, Alertness, Danger Sense, Dodge, Circle Student, Circle Master, 5 ranks in Concentration and Sense Motive.

Benefit: When wearing light armor or no armor, you gain a +1 insight bonus to your Armor Class.

Weapons and Accessories

The rapier is the mainstay of most swashbucklers—it is light enough that Medium-size creatures can use the Weapon Finesse feat with it, but large enough that it can effectively disarm most other weapons easily. It suffers slightly in the damage department, but its excellent threat range bolsters that weakness quite well. However, it is not the only weapon in a swashbuckler's arsenal. Daggers, quarterstaffs, short-swords, and longswords see common use. Swashbucklers hailing from settings that do not resemble Renaissance Europe often wield scimitars, kukris, or exotic double weapons such as two-bladed swords. For monk swashbucklers, *Oriental Adventures* presents a greatly expanded list of appropriate weapons in the monk class description.

Sword & Fist presents several more weapons appropriate to the swashbuckling setting, including the ward cestus, stump knife, triple dagger, and for exotic swashbucklers, the war fan. *Song & Silence* presents a variety of garrotes ideal for less scrupulous swashbucklers, and if the fashion of the setting permits, weighted sleeves might be common as a surprise weapon.

While ranged weapons are not forbidden, there is a certain stigma attached to their use. The tactics of the archer (namely, staying far away from your opponent and sniping at him) is considered extremely cowardly. For this reason, the most common ranged weapons in a swashbuckling campaign are those that have relatively short range or low rates of fire, so they

attempts while wearing medium armor.

Normal: You must be wearing light or no armor to parry a blow.

Crushing Defense

You parry with great force.

Prerequisites: Str 13+, Dex 13+, Int 13+, Expertise, Parry, Power Attack, Sunder, base attack +4 or higher.

Benefit: When you succeed at a parry attempt, you may attempt to sunder your opponent's weapon. Your weapon must be no more than one size category smaller than your opponent's weapon to sunder. If you succeed in parrying the blow, you deal damage to your opponent's weapon. If you succeed in destroying your opponent's weapon, he does not get a free opportunity to disarm you. You cannot sunder (and therefore damage) a natural attack or an unarmed strike when you parry.

Expert Parry

You may parry multiple attacks by the same creature.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Improved Parry, Parry.

Benefit: Your parry attempts can be divided among multiple creatures' attacks or a single creature's attacks as you see fit. Each parry attempt uses up an attack of opportunity granted by the Combat Reflexes feat.

Guarded Defense

You parry with surprising deftness.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Parry, base attack +4 or higher.

Benefit: When you make a parry attempt, it does not provoke an automatic disarm attempt.

Improved Parry

You may make many parry attempts in a round.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Parry.

Benefit: You may make a number of additional parry attempts in a round equal to your Dexterity bonus. Just as you cannot make multiple attacks of opportunity against the same creature in a round, you cannot attempt to parry multiple attacks made by a single creature in a round. Each parry attempt uses up an attack of opportunity granted by the Combat Reflexes feat.

might be fired and then discarded before closing into melee. Thrown weapons, such as daggers and throwing axes, are generally considered acceptable by swashbuckling society. Crossbows, particularly the light and hand varieties, are also considered to be appropriate for a swashbuckler to carry. *Song & Silence* presents the covered hand crossbow and the grapple-firing crossbow, both very appropriate for sneaky swashbucklers. In most swashbuckling settings, however, most of these weapons should be replaced by firearms.

Renaissance firearms are described on pages 162 and 163 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but the weapons described there aren't very suitable for replacing bows in a standard D&D game. In the weapon chart below, you'll find new statistics for firearms suitable to a swashbuckling campaign. To balance the changes, and to reflect the notable lack of heavy armor in a swashbuckling campaign, firearms should ignore armor bonuses and natural armor bonuses to AC—in effect, they become ranged-touch weapons.

Buckler: Unlike normal shields, a buckler can be used to parry. When a buckler is used to parry, you loose its bonus to your AC for 1 round. A buckler grants you a +2 bonus to parry attempts you make with the buckler.

Cloak, Dueling: This exotic weapon is actually nothing more than a common cloak, although it is usually made of thick, sturdy leather. Because it is a defensive weapon, it is almost always used as an off-hand weapon along with a rapier or similar weapon. The dueling cloak has two primary uses: It can be used like a buckler, granting a +1 bonus to AC that stacks with the bonus from a suit of armor, and it can be used to blind a foe in a grapple, after establishing a hold and making a successful grapple check, by throwing it over the foe's head instead of dealing damage. This form of attack follows all the normal rules and restrictions of grappling, and you lose the cloak's armor bonus when grappling in this fashion. Although you can be disarmed, you do not loose your dueling cloak, nor do characters who disarm you have the ability to pick up the cloak and take it from you; instead, you continue to wear your cloak and must draw it again (wrap it around your arm) to use it. If you are using the parrying rules presented in this article, the dueling cloak also grants a +2 to parrying attempts you make with it. A dueling cloak has the same armor check penalty and spell failure chance as a buckler in any round that it is used as a weapon or a shield. You cannot gain the bonus to Armor Class from both a dueling cloak and a shield.

Daishalar: A favored weapon of elven swashbucklers, the daishalar is essentially a rapier with a dagger blade attached to the pommel. Because of this arrangement, the daishalar is usually held in a high guard position, with the blade angled down toward the opponent. This makes the daishalar difficult to master, but it is a deadly weapon nonetheless. An accomplished wielder can lunge past his foe, thrusting with the leaf-shaped rapier blade as he passes, then reverse the thrust to ram the dagger into a foe's back.

You can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier to attack rolls with a daishalar.

The daishalar is a double weapon. You may fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons, as if you were using a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. Creatures using the daishalar one-handed cannot use it as a double weapon.

Main-Gauche: The main-gauche is simply a dagger with a large, ornate basket hilt and crossguard attached to it. It grants a +2 on all disarm and parry attempts, but the main-gauche cannot be thrown like a normal dagger.

Musket: A musket is a ranged-touch weapon, and it requires two hands to use, regardless of the user's size. A Medium-size or larger character can shoot, but not load, a musket with one hand at a -4 penalty. A Medium-size or larger character can shoot, but not load, a musket with each hand at a -6 penalty, plus the usual -4 penalty for the off-hand attack (-6 primary hand/-10 off hand). It requires a standard action to reload.

Pistol: A pistol is a ranged-touch weapon. It requires a standard action to reload.

Quarterstaff: The quarterstaff grants an additional +2 to parry attempts.

Rapier, Halfling: This is a Small-sized rapier used by halflings. Human duelists occasionally use them as off-hand weapons and refer to them as smallswords. They have all the stan-

Incredible Parry

You can parry attacks from weapons much larger than the one you wield.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Expertise, Parry, base attack +6 or higher.

Benefit: You may parry an attack from a weapon up to three size categories larger than the one you wield.

Special: This feat can be taken multiple times. Each time it is taken, you can parry a weapon one more size category larger than you otherwise could. Thus, a character who had taken this feat three times could parry a Gargantuan weapon with a dagger.

Protective Parry

Your training enables you to defend not only yourself, but also friendly creatures adjacent to you.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Expertise, Parry.

Benefit: When a creature that you threaten is attacked, you may use a parry attempt for the round to parry a blow that would hit that creature.

Normal: You may only attempt to parry attacks directed at you.

Special: If you have the Improved Parry feat, you may parry multiple attacks against allies within the area you threaten with your weapon, but you cannot protect any creature more than once per round. If you have the Expert Parry feat, you may parry multiple attacks that would hit the same creature regardless of their source. In both cases, parrying for another creature uses up a parry attempt and a possible attack of opportunity for the round.

Steel Skin

You have learned how to parry when unarmed, enabling you to block sword blows with your open hand. When you do so successfully, you can avoid any damage to your own hand or body.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Int 13+, Expertise, Improved Unarmed Strike, Parry, base attack +4 or higher.

Benefit: You may make a parry attempt with an unarmed strike. Your hand counts as a weapon two size categories smaller than you.

Normal: You can only parry with a weapon.

the most part, though, swashbucklers tend to stay near the wealthier cities, where they can interact with the high society they love.

Duels

Swashbucklers love duels. Within most swashbuckling cultures, dueling is the quickest way to gain great fame and honor—and also a way to become an object of shame or ridicule for those that lose. Duels can be fought over just about anything, ranging from an insult (real or imagined) to something as trivial as who has the right to retrieve the Countess's fallen handkerchief and hand it back to her. Duels are seldom fought on the spot, however, as the city guards tend to look upon the practice unfavorably. Rather, once a challenge has been issued and accepted, the participants agree upon a place and time for the duel, and upon any other terms of the fight. Common conditions include whether the duel will be to the death or to first blood, what weapons will be allowed, or whether the duelists may bring seconds. Seconds are friends or comrades of the duelists who come to observe the duel. Ostensibly, the seconds are there to ensure that the other side does not cheat and to observe who wins the duel, but often a second stands ready to avenge his friend should the victory go to the other duelist.

Generally, a one-on-one duel is considered an appropriate challenge if the creature opposing the player character has a Challenge Rating 3 lower than the EL of an appropriate challenge for a party of four characters of the same level. In most cases, a duel with an NPC three levels lower than the dueling PC will result in the PC's success and consume approximately 20% of the PC's resources. Be aware that this procedure is not a science: Some monsters or NPCs will have abilities that make them a greater challenge to a particular PC than the CR would suggest, and some monsters or NPC duelists will represent very little challenge despite their CR. When assessing the likelihood of a PC's success in a duel, be sure to examine both duelists' capabilities carefully. The process of assigning appropriate challenges is more fully addressed in the Appropriate Challenges for Group Sizes Other than Four in this month's "Dungeoncraft."

Because duels are usually fought one-on-one, the event can often be rather dull for the players who are not directly involved. After all, who wants to sit and watch another player roll dice for a half an hour because a member of a rival dueling society spilled wine on his character's tabard? With that in mind, here are a few suggestions for the DM to keep the rest of the players busy:

Bring Friends: If all of the PCs are swashbuckling types, you can keep them busy by simply giving the bad guy enough friends for everyone to have a duel at the same time. If this seems too contrived, an entourage of lesser foes (such as low-ranking guards or mercenaries) might be more appropriate. This method has the advantage of keeping everyone in combat, which minimizes the confusion and delay of jumping in and out of the turn-based initiative system. However, it might make the PCs not involved in the main duel feel like they're just there to be the cleanup crew.

Make the Villain Tough: For major villains, the DM might make the foe a significantly higher level than the PCs so that it takes a concerted attack from the entire party to be victorious. This method, like the method presented above, keeps all the PCs working in a consistent time frame. Obviously, this method doesn't work for run-of-the-mill duels; it must be saved for primary campaign villains.

Even the Odds: Evil swashbucklers are notorious for using treachery and deceit—just watch any Three Musketeers movie. While one PC is engaged in a duel, have the others spot something, such as a sniper on a nearby roof with a crossbow aimed at the dueling PC or an unscrupulous wizard casting enhancement spells on the enemy to give him an unfair advantage. The biggest advantage to letting the PCs thwart some treachery is that it makes them feel like they're actually accomplishing something of their own, not just mopping up thugs. If all the PCs are involved in combat, it's easy enough to simply run the combat using one initiative order and simply cut back and forth. You also have to make sure that the treachery will keep the other party members occupied for the entire duel; a sniper on a rooftop with only a couple of rickety ladders leading up to it is much more difficult for a group of fighters to get to and deal with than for a wizard with a *magic missile* spell.

Place Your Bets: Duels, as formal affairs that occur at a scheduled time and place, tend to attract quite a lot of spectators, many of whom are often quite happy to make wagers on the outcome. While the duel is going on, let the other players roleplay their characters taking part in the gambling. If you need to introduce a plot hook to send the party off on another adventure, this is an ideal opportunity. You can introduce important NPC contacts, potential employers, and new rivals for the PCs during the flurry of gambling that surrounds the duel.

Bring in an Assistant: Since duels are a fairly common occurrence in swashbuckling campaigns, you might want to nominate a player as an assistant DM to run the duel. This player can be the player of the character who agrees to act as second in the duel, freeing you up to run the rest of the party through more of the main story. The advantage of this, of course, is that it minimizes the confusion of trying to jump between the duel and the other PCs' actions, and it eliminates wait time for all players involved.

Pizza Run: Without a doubt, the simplest way to occupy the rest of the players is to send them on a pizza, soda, or snack run while the duel is resolved. Of course, on the down side, this usually only works once per game session (unless your group eats a lot of pizza), and even then the timing must be right. When it works out, however, this is often the best means of playing out a duel in which other players need not be involved.

Dueling Societies

Dueling societies are one part thieves' guild, one part adventuring company, and one part social club. They are excellent ways to introduce plot hooks into a campaign, and they can provide the PCs with allies (or enemies) at vital points during an adventure. Most large cities have at least a few dueling societies, allowing for fierce rivalries between groups of swashbucklers. Most dueling societies require their members to pay monthly or yearly dues, in return for which members enjoy a variety of benefits, depending upon the society. Some have exclusive, members-only taverns or shops,

others keep a stable of fencing masters on retainer to teach members new techniques. Still others, often of a shadier bent, keep a special fund set aside for bailing members out of prison. A few generic dueling societies are presented below.

Fencing School: Many fencing masters decide to share their techniques with the world and open fencing schools. These schools are usually located in major cities where dueling is a common practice. Obviously, their primary purpose is to instruct students in various fencing styles, but they might also arrange bloodless competitions and exhibitions with rival schools. Such schools are very expensive, often charging upward of 1,000 gp per year to study there.

Royal Guards: Often a military unit rather than a private organization, royal guards (like the King's Musketeers as portrayed in Alexandre Dumas's novels) are the elite of their country's armed forces. Headquartered in the capital city, if not in the royal palace itself, the royal guards' principle duty is to safeguard the royal family. The royal guards' secondary duty is often to act as the king's eyes, ears, and when necessary, his hand. In many lands, a royal guard is considered to speak and act in the monarch's name at all times, thus placing him above the law. Unlike most dueling societies, which charge their members dues, royal guards usually pay their members a generous salary, sometimes as much as 15 gp per month.

Adventuring Company: Swashbucklers crave adventure and excitement, and they often band together to find such diversions. Adventuring companies often keep heralds, scouts, and explorers on retainer to scour the land for potential deeds of daring-do. If a cruel tyrant has taken power in a nearby city, or war seems imminent between two nations, the adventuring company will learn of it through their sources and pass word on to its members. Inevitably, at least a few of the members will express interest and charge off to try and write themselves into the history books. Adventuring companies are often led by older swashbucklers past their prime who want to live vicariously through younger heroes. Most adventuring companies charge dues of 50-100 gp per year, but some charge no dues at all, funding their activities through private donations—some even bring in revenue by holding auctions, during which members bid on the exclusive rights to a certain quest.

Bounty Hunters' Guild: In the bounty hunting profession, having the necessary information about your target is vital to success. Bounty hunters' guilds form to provide exactly this sort of information. All members of a bounty hunters' guild are obligated to share whatever information they might have about the targets of their fellow hunters, regardless of personal feelings. Failure to do so always results in expulsion from the guild and might be punishable by death in certain guilds. Bounty hunters' guilds usually have a fairly large number of informants, snitches, and stoolpigeons to keep the guild informed as to the movements of potential quarries, and many have instructors who teach guild members tricks for bringing their quarry back alive—which sometimes means killing the target and having a scroll of *raise dead* handy when the bounty hunter gets to the delivery point. Yearly dues are usually somewhat high to cover the costs of bribing informants and occasionally government officials (between 100 gp and 200 gp on average).

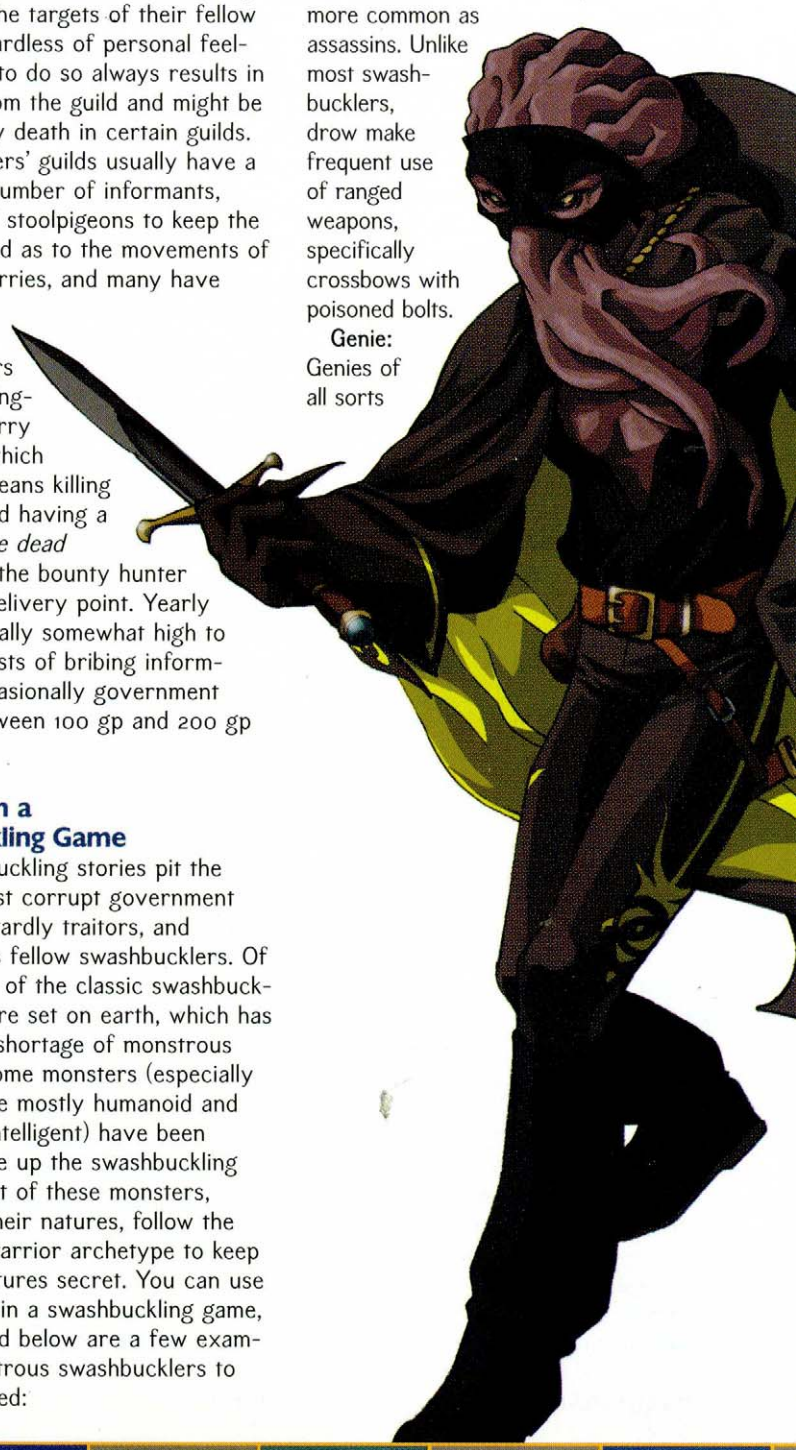
Monsters in a Swashbuckling Game

Most swashbuckling stories pit the heroes against corrupt government officials, dastardly traitors, and unscrupulous fellow swashbucklers. Of course, most of the classic swashbuckling stories are set on earth, which has a noticeable shortage of monstrous creatures. Some monsters (especially those that are mostly humanoid and reasonably intelligent) have been known to take up the swashbuckling lifestyle. Most of these monsters, because of their natures, follow the mysterious warrior archetype to keep their true natures secret. You can use any monster in a swashbuckling game, and presented below are a few examples of monstrous swashbucklers to get you started:

Doppleganger: Dopplegangers make for excellent swashbuckling villains. They provide an alternative to the "long lost identical twin" storyline common to swashbuckling campaigns. Their love of manipulating and deceiving humanoids makes them ideal villains for campaigns focusing on the political intrigue of a swashbuckling setting.

Drow: With their natural agility, cunning, and ruthlessness, drow make excellent evil swashbucklers. While they make fearsome duelists, they are even more common as assassins. Unlike most swashbucklers, drow make frequent use of ranged weapons, specifically crossbows with poisoned bolts.

Genie: Genies of all sorts



travel to the Material Plane to conduct business, search for treasure, and fight. While they are on the Material Plane, their boisterous nature and their love of guile and trickery often cause them to fall in with the swashbuckling crowd. Most genies disdain personal combat, but the few exceptions are often master fencers, wielding massive scimitars with blinding speed.

Goblinoids: While they generally lack the wit to be true swashbucklers in their own right, some of the larger goblinoids (such as bugbears and hobgoblins) are hired as guards by wealthy nobles or merchants looking for a little extra muscle. In lands controlled by cruel dictators, goblinoids often form a secret police force.

Lich: Where there are wizards, there are bound to be liches. Liches often pursue mystical power over the political variety. Liches might be heavily involved in smuggling or piracy in order to acquire rare magical compounds and items, and many liches use their powerful magic to create cursed ghost ships crewed by the undead.

Medusa: Medusas love objects of art, fine jewels, and wealth, making them perfect creatures to face in a swashbuckling setting. Medusas are occasionally drawn to the high society through which swashbucklers move, and sometimes they seek to infiltrate it in order to amass their own fortunes. Medusas take great pains to conceal their monstrous nature, only revealing their true visages when forced.

Rakshasa: Rakshasas love the high life, and swashbuckling is all about living the high life. With their ability to assume a normal humanoid form, rakshasas are seldom suspected of being anything more than nobles who are unusually cruel to their servants. At the DM's discretion, the rakshasa's vulnerability to blessed crossbow bolts might be expanded to include blessed musket balls.

Succubus: Succubi live to seduce mortals and suck their life away—when coupled with the swashbuckler's penchant for wenching and louting, succubi make dangerous foes indeed. They are less likely to become fencers or duelists as they are to become charmers and seducers.

Vampire: The epitome of the urbane monster, vampires are ideally suited to a swashbuckling campaign. Their incredible Strength, Dexterity, and Charisma scores, coupled with their spell-like abilities and immunities, make them truly formidable fencers.

Adventure Hooks

Any of the sources listed in the Bibliography provide ample ideas for creative DMs to work from. Swashbuckling exploits are usually focused on high adventure and deeds of derring-do: Threats to the safety of the kingdom or the monarch, loved ones kidnapped for nefarious purposes, and good old-fashioned revenge are all common motivations for a swashbuckling adventure. To help you get started, here is a short list of adventure hooks to be fleshed out into full-blown adventures.

- The PCs overhear a group of thugs concerned about having slain a powerful noble in an alleyway robbery—but the noble still runs his business. The PCs might dismiss this as idle boasting, but in fact the noble is dead, and a phasm has taken the opportunity to take his form and his power.
- A PC's true love is revealed to be closely related to the recently dead king, and an evil noblewoman has kidnapped him, hoping that a forced marriage might give her a claim to the throne.
- One of the PCs receives an anonymous letter saying that the man who killed his father and brother has recently arrived in the city. The letter includes a detailed description and the location where the man is staying, but can the PC trust the sender of the mysterious letter?
- A tyrannical lord is kidnapping peasants on his lands and selling them to slave traders. Any who dare to protest, or try to learn the whereabouts of those taken, are rounded up and either sold to the slavers or executed. The PCs, donning masks to protect their identities, must disrupt the slave trade, rescue the slaves, and depose the lord.
- A rival nation's ships are attacking merchant vessels flying the flag of the PCs' country. The PCs are given letters of marque (documents that grant them royal permission to raid the ships of their nations enemies) and a captured vessel of the enemy nation's navy. The PCs must acquire a crew and strike back at the opposing nation, capturing or sinking its merchant ships and harrying its navy.
- The PCs' home country (or their current country of residence) has gone to war, and the enemy country is arresting and enslaving all citizens of the PCs' nation within its borders on trumped-up charges of espionage. The PCs must sneak into enemy territory, discover where their countrymen are being held, and rescue them, all the while masquerading as citizens of the enemy nation to avoid capture.
- As members of their monarch's personal guard, the PCs must travel covertly to the capital city of the neighboring nation to deliver a treaty to the king. But their country's enemies have learned of this secret treaty and have dispatched their own agents to thwart the PCs. D

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here are a few web sites, books, and movies you might wish to investigate for more information. Each of the works looks at swashbuckling in a different way, and you should use the ones you enjoy the most as sources of inspiration for your own style of swashbucklers.

Players wishing to model their swashbuckling characters after a particular character in film or fiction should pay close attention to the speech patterns, specific phrases, and mannerisms of the characters that serve as their inspiration. Swashbuckling PCs and NPCs alike come to life readily with a few repeated gestures and phrases.

The Three Musketeers, The Man in the Iron Mask, and *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas.

The Three Musketeers (various film versions).

The Princess Bride (both the book by William Goldman and the 1987 film).

The Adventures of Robin Hood.

Captain Blood.

The Scarlet Pimpernel, by Baroness Emmuska Orczy.

Horatio Hornblower. (TV miniseries)

The Mask of Zorro.

The Association for Renaissance Martial Arts (**www.thehaca.com**).

The Shakespearean Insult Generator (**www-personal.umich.edu/~mmmurf/insult**).

The Jack of Swords Library page (**www.thejackofswords.com/library.htm**).

Meter and Measure

Masterworks to Improve Bardic Abilities

by Tim Hitchcock with Matthew Sernett · illustrated by Todd Harris

Masterpiece performances are works of famous quality. They are the compositions, dance routines, epics, songs, poems, and plays that people hold to be the very best of their art. In the hands of a competent performer, one of these works is gripping, but when performed by a true master of the piece, the performance seems to have a magic and life all its own.

Composers, writers, and choreographers put days, weeks, and months of their lives into the creation of these masterpieces. They often spend vast sums of money on materials and study, and they even put some of their souls into the creation of their masterpieces: Such greatness can't be accomplished without sacrifice.

A performer who has mastered a masterpiece performance gains extraordinary benefits. His performances of that work often seem better than his other artistic endeavors, and a competent bard can often accomplish stunning feats when using one of these works in conjunction with bardic music.

MASTERING MASTERPIECE PERFORMANCES

Anyone can perform a masterpiece performance, but only those who have mastered it gain the extraordinary benefits of the work. Mastery requires that a character devote time and mental resources to learning the work. Essentially, the character learns to perform the work to its best potential, memorizing every phrase, note, or motion involved.

A character who wishes to master a masterpiece performance must first have a written copy of the work. This must be the version penned by the creator of the masterpiece; even the most brilliant replications fail to capture the true spirit of the work. The character must then study the work for 1 day per 500 gp of the masterpiece performance's value. This time need not be on consecutive days, and a day's study can be interrupted by short breaks and light activity.

At any point after completing study of the work, the character must devote the required ranks of Perform to it before she can gain the benefit of a masterpiece performance; these ranks do not need to be devoted all at once. Works of greater value require more ranks to master. For each full 1,000 gp that the masterpiece performance is worth, the character must devote 1 rank of Perform to the work; a character must always devote at least 1 rank. Normally, a character taking a rank in Perform would choose to devote it to some other performance type, like lute, juggling, or poetry. The character has not mastered the masterpiece performance until all the necessary ranks have been devoted to the work.

A character attempting to master a masterpiece performance that he created does not need to spend the required time to do so, but he must still devote Perform ranks to the work.

USING MASTERPIECE PERFORMANCES

Naturally, if the masterpiece performance was created to be played by a particular type of instrument, the performer must have a rank of Perform devoted to that instrument and use that instrument to perform the work. A character without a Perform (drama) rank does not gain the benefit of a masterpiece play until a Perform rank is devoted to drama and the required amount is devoted to the masterpiece play. After mastering a work and gaining proficiency in the necessary performance style, a character gains the benefits of the work each time the character performs that work. Of course, only characters with a level of bard who use the proper bardic music ability can gain any benefits that pertain to that ability.

Few bards master the great works of many different performance styles. Most devote themselves to one art, wanting to become known as a virtuoso or master orator. Some bards spend their entire lives creating and pursuing the mastery of one great masterpiece.

BARDIC JOURNALS

Bards are notorious for wandering about while writing songs and stories, drawing pictures, and jotting down bits of poetry

and stray bits of historical facts. So where do they keep all their work? In their journals, of course. Each bard's journal is a unique collection of songs, tales, pieces of lost history, bardic knowledge, and possibly even a spell or a couple of new tricks. While the journals aren't powerful magical items, they can contain information that is extremely rare, and many contain their owner's most cherished works: masterpiece performances.

The Journal of Griphill Asterbuck

A curiosity not to be trifled with, a clown, a prankster, and a delight to all, Griphill was one of the greatest and most renowned gnome troubadours ever to tickle the world's fancy. His journal is written in a lighthearted manner and highlights his ever curious and always humorous outlook.

The journal has a worn, patchwork leather cover and is shaped more like a case than a book. It is held shut with a steel latch and is crammed full of dozens of pages, each covered with squiggly handwriting in different colored inks. In addition to a collection of original jokes, riddles, and pranks that have become classics in gnome circles, the journal contains three masterpiece performances.

The Masked Swine of Eiden: This song tells the incredibly ludicrous tale of a dueling pig who wears red patchwork pajamas and a mask made from fig pudding, which he can remove by licking his face clean. Eventually, he seduces the queen and challenges the king to a truffle-gathering contest for the entire kingdom. Usually sung fast and at a high volume, it can be accompanied by almost any instrument although no instrument is required. When a bard who has mastered the work sings "The Masked Swine of Eiden" while using the *fascinate* ability, *fascinated* creatures suffer a -7 penalty to Listen checks.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (ballad) skill; **Market Price:** 900 gp; **Cost to Create:** 450 gp + 36 XP.

The Dirge of Dirty Dirk: Contrary to the title, this piece is quite humorous. The music itself is slow and somber, but the lyrics lament "the death of a man nobody could stand, the direful dirty Dirk." It's based on the true story of an infamous tax collector who everyone wished would die. This long song allows a bard who has mastered it to extend the duration that *fascinated* creatures will listen to the song 4 rounds beyond the level of the singing bard.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (dirge) skill; **Market Price:** 800 gp; **Cost to Create:** 400 gp + 32 XP.

Spoons, Tankards, and Knuckles: A tavern specialty, "Spoons, Tankards, and Knuckles" is a percussion piece usually played on a tavern table using only the items mentioned in its title. It starts simple but builds into a rapid and complex heart-pounding rhythm. It can also be played as a follow and repeat game, and often great wagers are placed on the outcome. Although common in taverns, inns, and dining halls, bards who have mastered this complicated masterpiece can play it using the "instruments" mentioned in the title and gain a +10 competence bonus to Perform skill checks.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (drum) skill; **Market Price:** 2,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,000 gp + 80 XP.

FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN

It might seem odd that bards can only gain the benefit of masterpiece performances if they study the original work. As masterpiece performances are non-magical, it would appear logical that anyone could simply copy the document and reap the rewards. Unfortunately, this idea creates a game balance problem. In effect, any masterpiece performance would only be as expensive as the paper it was printed on and the cost of labor. That means that bards would sacrifice very little to gain the benefits of the works: They would be unable to use the Perform skill in as many different ways, but few bards ever use all of their many performance skills.

In your campaign, you might decide that masterpiece performances are magic items. They already follow similar price guidelines and creation rules. If you decide to use this option, consider making masterpiece performances something only bards can create and use. You might also want to make the magic of masterpiece performances be used up after they are read much like the way a *tome of leadership* works.

Kurghra's Sash

Kurghra was a very serious half-orc capable of rousing her kinfolk to levels of bloody inspiration. Because she was born a woman and a half-breed, she was ridiculed and made into the village fool. Her malicious tribe members constantly baited her to entertain them after they'd returned from battle. In order to revenge herself, she'd twist their tales of glory into scathing commentaries of their battle mishaps using her exceptional mastery of double entendre. She was so good at it that only the most intelligent tribe members understood when she was insulting a warrior to his face. Luckily for her, the chieftain realized she had a talent for manipulating language and allowed her to learn how to read and write. Later on, she would inspire her tribe's warriors before battles, but her greatest performance started a bloody riot at the Gathering of the Twelve Tribes. As a result, the remaining orcs united under the only chieftain she hadn't slandered in the performance—her own. The chieftain married her a few years later, and eventually Kurghra inherited the throne.

Kurghra's sash is a string of large wooden beads almost four yards in length. Each bead is intricately carved with words and musical notation in Orc. Kurghra customarily wore the sash draped over her shoulder. In addition to its written contents, the journal acts as a *cloak of resistance +4*. The journal contains hundreds of factual notes about orc history, religious ceremonies, battle tactics, tribal mannerisms, and cultural behavior. In addition to these things, Kurghra carved a single masterpiece performance on the beads.

While We Blindly Hang Our Faces Down: This story, written in Orc, tells the tale of the betrayals, crimes, and injustices that certain orc leaders had bestowed upon their own kin and incites the listener to take up arms against

injustice and enemies. Although written about orc tribes, nothing but the names makes the story peculiar to the orc race. This is the original piece Kurghra used to incite the riot of the twelve tribes. The story can be told to inspire courage by any bard who has mastered the work. When "While We Blindly Hang Our Faces Down" is used in this manner, the inspire courage bardic ability grants a +3 morale bonus to saving throws against charm and fear effects and a +3 morale bonus to attack and weapon damage rolls.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (literature) skill, Perform (storytelling) skill; **Market Price:** 8,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,250 gp + 340 XP; **Weight of Kurghra's Sash:** 10 lb.

The Book of Blackworm

The infamous halfling bard Feydell Blackfoot, generally known as "the Blackworm of Billowshire," came from a long line of cheerful and happy bards. Feydel was born a runt, and by the time he was fully mature, he stood only 2 feet tall. His cheerfulness was equally stunted after he was abducted by gnolls and sold to a traveling freak show as the "World's Tiniest Man." He made few friends and was kept in a box when he wasn't performing. One day a child commented on Feydel in front of the carnival leader. The boy said, "That's it? He's just a small man. Can't he do anything else, like juggle?" Thus the frustrated barker taught Feydel to juggle and sealed his own fate. Once Feydel's "inner-bard" awakened, he swiftly picked up tumbling, acrobatics, and a number of wonderful dances. He also learned the dangerous arts of sword swallowing, fire breathing, and knife-throwing. One night, after five years of training, he showed off his latest trick in front of a packed house of onlookers. While juggling a half-score of flaming daggers, he threw them one by one into the carnival barker, turning him into a flaming pincushion before the shocked crowd. Feydel left the circus shortly thereafter and made an illustrious career for himself as a jester and assassin in the courts of more than a dozen wicked tyrants.

Feydell's journal is a small square book bound in dark red pigskin. Feydel wrote every entry in Halfling using a mirror, so the handwriting of the entire text is reversed. The Book of Blackworm contains notes and diagrams describing the proper way to eat fire, swords, and other sharp objects. It also contains scribbled notes about the deviant interactions that take place behind the scenes of half a dozen royal courts and several masterpiece performances.

The Blackworm Wiggle: This dance is a gut-wrenchingly comic performance of how a fisherman's worm attracts a fish. Feydel used it to transform the suspicions of courtly visitors into laughter, most often right before they were to be assassinated. Apparently, he enjoyed the similarity between himself and the bait, thus earning himself his moniker. A master of the dance can use it to *fascinate* creatures, causing them to suffer a -8 penalty to Spot and Listen checks, instead of the usual -4 penalty.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (action) skill, Perform (dance) skill; **Market Price:** 4,800 gp; **Cost to Create:** 2,400 gp + 192 XP.

The Flying Fire Daggers: In this routine a performer juggles six flaming daggers. This is a version of the work Feydel performed to win his freedom—without its deadly finale. The complicated and dangerous-looking act can be used by a master to inspire competence in an ally, granting a +5 competence bonus to whatever skill the bard is inspiring her ally to succeed in using.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (action) skill, Perform (juggle) skill; **Market Price:** 900 gp; **Cost to Create:** 450 gp + 36 XP.

Toleyman's Poke: This frightening children's song is about the Toleyman who steals babies, puts them in his sack, and rides off to hell to bake them into pudding. The tune was created to be played on a mandolin and alternates between slow and creepy and a fast, loud strumming whenever the Toleyman pops out. The tune can be played with or without accompanying singing, and a master of it can play it to use the countersong ability for up to 15 rounds.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (mandolin) skill; **Market Price:** 1,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 500 gp + 40 XP.

The Journal of Wysan Lefyn

Wysan Lefyn was a half-elven bard who had a suitor in every land that she had ever visited. For this reason, she refused to stop her journeys until the day she died, lest she be forced to settle on just one lover. Apparently, she also took the same approach to the notes of the scale because she favored none and all at the same time—her nimble fingers flew across the strings of her harp with such unbelievable speed and accuracy that many believed she was possessed.

Wysan's journal is a slim book with a blue beaded cover embroidered with three carp arranged head to tail, to form a circle. The journal contains an extremely long list of descriptions of fine taverns and inns throughout a dozen countries and three masterpiece performances. Given her rowdy, happy-go-lucky personality, many bards are surprised that Wysan's greatest works are all tragedies, but those who knew her best, the barkeeps and innkeepers along the roads she traveled, understand that they reveal Wysan's true feelings about life.

The Blood Tears of Corellon: The "Blood Tears of Corellon" is an exquisite elven epic in four parts. Each part flows easily through several different keys and tempos. It tells the story of how Gruumsh used a few drops of Corellon's

FOR YOUR CHARACTER

Masterpiece performances are a great way to make your bard unique, especially if your character creates them. You can "specialize" in using a particular instrument or performance type by learning masterpiece performances of that instrument or type, and you can use the creation of masterpiece performances as a way to garner fame for your character.

Even if you don't play a bard, you might find some more use from the Perform skill by learning a masterpiece performance that grants you a bonus on Perform skill checks. You might also use Crafting normal performances as a way to gain favor and make money.

blood to absorb the life energy of the elves, thus forcing all of them to become mortals and need sleep. Gruumsh reasoned that sleeping elves would be far easier for his orcs to slaughter. Eventually, Corellon was able to defeat Gruumsh in a bloody sword fight that lasted half a year. The orc god's spilled blood did not return immortality to elves, but it granted them the gift of trance and very long lives. When sung and played on the harp by a master, "The Blood Tears of Corellon" grants the performer a +15 competence bonus to Perform skill checks, but only in the estimation of elves or half-elves; listeners of other races hear only the performer's normal skill.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (epic) skill, Perform (harp) skill; **Market Price:** 4,500 gp; **Cost to Create:** 2,250 gp + 180 XP.

The Red Gates: This ode was written about a mighty swordswoman who died at the gates of Khemit-Li. When hordes of goblins besieged the fortress-city, she alone rushed out to shut the gates. She was able to close them and save the city, but her blood painted the gates forever. When sung to inspire courage by a master of the work, the effect of the inspire courage bardic ability lasts for 10 rounds after the bard stops singing.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (literature) skill, Perform (ode) skill; **Market Price:** 1,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 500 gp + 40 XP.

Battle Hymn of the Eastern Fjords: A favorite in the northlands, this hymn praises the fallen heroes who died honorably at the battle of the Eastern Fjords during the Sputtergore orc invasions. The united forces of humans, elves, and dwarves all suffered heavy losses when the ice that spanned the fjords broke beneath the weight of the opposing armies. Traditionally, the audience is divided into different groups of humans, elves, and dwarves and the chorus is sung as a round. When sung to inspire greatness, it grants the target +4 temporary Hit Dice and a +3 competence bonus to attacks and Fortitude saves.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (hymn) skill; **Market Price:** 8,400 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,200 gp + 336 XP.

The Journal of Dumoin Rudok

Dumoin was a dwarven bard who spent many years wandering the dark depths of ancient mines, temples of forgotten gods, and ruins of long-dead civilizations seeking to reconstruct lost songs, art, and stories. He was an adventurer's bard, and although not famous for his musical performances, he was renowned for his stories about ancient people, places, and things. A fabulous orator, Dumoin augmented his tales with drama and magic, and he was rumored to be able to hold an audience's attention for days at a time. Dumoin wrote most of his own material and is considered by many people to be the author of some of the finest tales ever spun—he also made quite a fortune selling them.

Held closed by a heavy iron latch, the journal of Dumoin Rudok is a rather thick tome bound in extremely worn leather. The cover is unadorned except for a small dwarven rune branded into the spine that translates as the author's name. In addition to the information and maps of underground places that can be found in the journal, it also contains two masterpiece performances.

The God Who Wept: "The God Who Wept" tells the story of a corrupted civilization on the eve of destruction. Its people lived in a world without a savior, and it was prophesied that their salvation could only come from the true tears of an empathic god. This story grants its master a +15 competence bonus to Perform checks when telling it.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (literature) skill, Perform (story) skill; **Market Price:** 9,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,500 gp + 360 XP.

Dwarven Work Song: This droning song revels in the beauty of metal, gems, and stone. Dumoin found parts of it in several different abandoned dwarven cities, but he was never able to discover its name. When sung to inspire competence in the tasks of mining, digging, or smithing, it grants a +6 competence bonus.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (music) skill, Perform (chant) skill; **Market Price:** 1,200 gp; **Cost to Create:** 600 gp + 48 XP.

Ciraph's Mobile of Movement

Legend speaks of Ciraph, a mute human bard who could speak to her audiences through her supernatural mastery of dance. Ciraph was born mute as the result of a vengeful curse bestowed upon her mother, a dancing girl employed to the Emir of Sanarri. The emir's son became infatuated with the dancing girl, and the two of them became involved in an illicit affair. When the emir learned of his son's relationship with a commoner, he summoned an efreeti who whisked the pregnant dancer away from the palace and cursed both her and her unborn child so that neither of them would be able to speak the truth about the child's father. Ultimately, the emir's tactics failed him when his only son, distraught with grief, threw himself from the palace walls leaving the widowed emir without an heir.

The woman named her child Ciraph and taught her to master the art of dance. As the child grew, so did her gift for telling stories without words. Her reputation became so great that the emir, not knowing the girl's true identity, summoned her to dance in his court. Ciraph wrapped herself in one thousand scarves, and before the entire court, she danced the tale that revealed to all her noble birth and established her as the sole heiress to the throne.

Ciraph's mobile of movement consists of a series of ten etched-glass plates and five brass rods suspended from smaller brass wires. The plates can be suspended from the brass rods in different formations like a mobile. When held to the sunlight and spun, the light passes through the glass tablets and reveals different types of movement patterns. The device and the plates are always stored in an intricately carved ivory box with a red velvet lining. Accompanying the mobile in an intricately carved ivory scroll case are the dancer's notes written on papyrus

scrolls. The notes reveal how to arrange the glass tablets on the mobile to reveal the different dance patterns, including those of three masterpiece performances.

Requiem for Parigal: This dance is a lament about the fall of Castle Parigal, destroyed by the hoards of the Brooding Magus. The story tells the tale of a paladin named Dalmar who commanded Parigal's troops. Dalmar spent long hours in covert operations against the Brooding Magus, but the paladin's wife suspected he was instead having an affair with another woman. Her fears were confirmed when she saw him embrace the messenger who delivered the news of the Brooding Magus's imminent attack. Sadly, the paladin's wife misunderstood her husband's gesture and became so enraged that she slit his throat later that evening when he was bathing. When the hoards of the Brooding Magus arrived the next morning at dawn, Castle Parigal's troops were leaderless, and the castle fell within a matter of hours. When "Requiem for Parigal" is danced to *fascinate* creatures, the *fascinated* creatures suffer a -10 penalty to Spot checks instead of the normal -4 penalty.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (action) skill, Perform (dance) skill; **Market Price:** 3,600 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,800 gp + 144 XP.

The Trials of Ramir: This dance tells the epic saga about the adventures of a mortal incarnation of a god who must endure a series of twelve impossible trials to regain his divinity. Each of the trials was chosen for him by one of the other gods. The dancer alternates between the different personas of the gods, Ramir, and the challenges. "The Trials of Ramir" can be danced to inspire greatness by a bard who masters it, inspiring greatness in three extra creatures.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (action) skill, Perform (dance) skill; **Market Price:** 3,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,500 gp + 120 XP.

Captain Marsud's Ghost: "Captain Marsud's Ghost" relays the story of a mutinous crew of pirates that seizes control of the schooner *Golden Hawk* by tying the ship's captain to the anchor and dragging him to his death across the bottom of the ocean. Captain Marsud returned as a wight and one by one murdered his former crewmembers and turned them into wights. Now he commands the *Golden Hawk* with an unflinchingly loyal crew of undead. This mad dance relays the horror and the terror of the story of Captain Marsud, and when danced by a master, it inures those nearby to the terrors they face granting a +8 morale bonus against charm and fear effects when a bard dances it to inspire courage.

Prerequisites: Craft Masterpiece Performance, Craft (action) skill, Perform (dance) skill; **Market Price:** 9,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,500 gp + 360 XP.

CREATING MASTERPIECE PERFORMANCES

Masterpiece performances can be created by any character with the Craft Masterpiece Performance feat and the appropriate Craft skill (see the New Uses for Old Skills sidebar). A character creating a masterpiece performance must devote experience, time, and money to the work like a spellcaster creating a magic item (see

CRAFT MASTERPIECE PERFORMANCE

You can create a work of art so great that those who perform it can reap greater benefits than normal.

Prerequisites: Craft (action, literature, or music; depending on the type of performance to be created) 5 ranks.

Benefit: You can create a masterpiece performance of any type of performance that you are skilled at crafting. By mastering and performing this work, a character gains extraordinary benefits. To create a masterpiece performance, the creator must spend 1/25 of the masterpiece performance's price in XP, use up raw materials costing half this price, and succeed at the appropriate Craft skill check. See the rest of this article for more masterpiece performance crafting rules.

Normal: You can craft performances and sell them, but they do not offer the benefits of a masterpiece performance.

NEW USES FOR OLD SKILLS

The Craft skill can be used to create performances in the same manner that the Craft skill can be used to make items. In addition, the craft skill is useful for creating masterpiece performances.

The inherent value and DC needed to create works with the use of this skill are determined by the creator. Thus, a poet commissioned to craft a poem to honor the marriage of a king would want to craft a "complex or superior item," making the DC 20 (see the description of the Craft skill in the *Player's Handbook*). He would then set a value for the work and attempt to craft it. This value might be whatever the king and the poet wish it to be. Value in this instance is roughly equivalent to the work's length rather than the work's quality: Quality is determined by the DC. Once finished, the work can then be sold to the king.

Only original works of these types have value. Once everyone at the king's wedding has heard the poem, it is repeated and passed from bard to bard. A creator cannot simply make copies of a crafted work and sell them all at the decided value.

Craft (literature): This skill encompasses plays, odes, epics, poems, stories, and other works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and prose.

Craft (music): This skill is used to create ballads, chants, operas, orchestral pieces, songs, hymns, and other works played on instruments or performed with song.

Craft (action): Performances of dance, buffoonery, miming, juggling, and other physical acts are created using this skill.

Special: A character with 5 or more ranks of the Perform skill devoted to mastering masterpiece performances of one type (action, literature, or music) gains a +2 synergy bonus to Craft skill checks to create performances of the same type.

Chapter 8: Magic Items in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

To create a masterpiece performance, the creator must spend 1/25 of the masterpiece performance's price in XP and use up raw materials costing half the masterpiece performance's price. To determine the value of a masterpiece performance, see the Masterpiece Performance Gold Piece Values chart. The caster must spend one day per 1,000 gp value of the masterpiece performance creating the work, with a minimum of one day.

In addition, at the end of the time needed to create the work, the character must succeed at a Craft skill check (DC 20). Success indicates that the masterpiece performance has been created. See the New Uses for Old Skills sidebar for more details about how to use the Craft skill in this manner.

Failure indicates that no progress was made and the character must again devote the required time to create the masterpiece performance. A failure by 5 or more indicates that the character must additionally pay half of the material cost as well as again devoting the necessary time.

Masterpiece performances can grant a benefit to more than one thing just as a magic item can have more than one beneficial property. As with multiple powers of a magic item, determine the price of each benefit of the masterpiece performance and double the cost of all but the most expensive benefit before adding them all together to determine the final price. In most cases, it will be more economical and require less Perform ranks to use masterpiece performances with one benefit, but then only one benefit can be gained while performing each work.

MASTERPIECE PERFORMANCE GOLD PIECE VALUES

Effect	Effect Price
Perform skill competence bonus	bonus squared x 40 gp††
Limited Perform skill competence bonus	bonus squared x 20 gp††
*Inspire courage**	
Increased duration**	+200 gp per round in excess of 5 extra rounds
Morale bonus against charm and fear**	extra bonus squared x 250 gp††
Morale bonus to attacks and damage**	extra bonus squared x 2,000 gp††
*Countersong**	
Increased duration**	+200 gp per round in excess of 10 rounds
*Fascinate**	
Increased duration**	+200 gp per round in excess of bard's level
Increased range**	+100 gp per 10 feet in excess of 90 feet
Penalty to Spot**†	extra penalty squared x 100 gp††
Penalty to Listen**†	extra penalty squared x 100 gp††
*Inspire competence**	
Increased range**	+100 gp per 5 feet in excess of 30 feet
Competence bonus**	extra bonus squared x 100 gp††
*Inspire greatness**	
Increased duration**	+200 gp per round in excess of 5 extra rounds
Increased range**	+100 gp per 5 feet in excess of 30 feet
Extra creatures**	+1,000 gp per creature in excess of normal
Temporary Hit Dice**	number (in excess of +2) of extra Hit Dice squared x 1,000 gp
Competence bonus to attacks**	extra bonus squared x 1,000 gp††
Competence bonus to Fortitude**	extra bonus squared x 300 gp††

*Only bards who have enough Perform ranks to use this ability can craft a masterpiece performance that grants any of the listed bonus effects. Characters without this bardic music ability gain no benefit from the bonus effects unless they later gain the use of this bardic music ability.

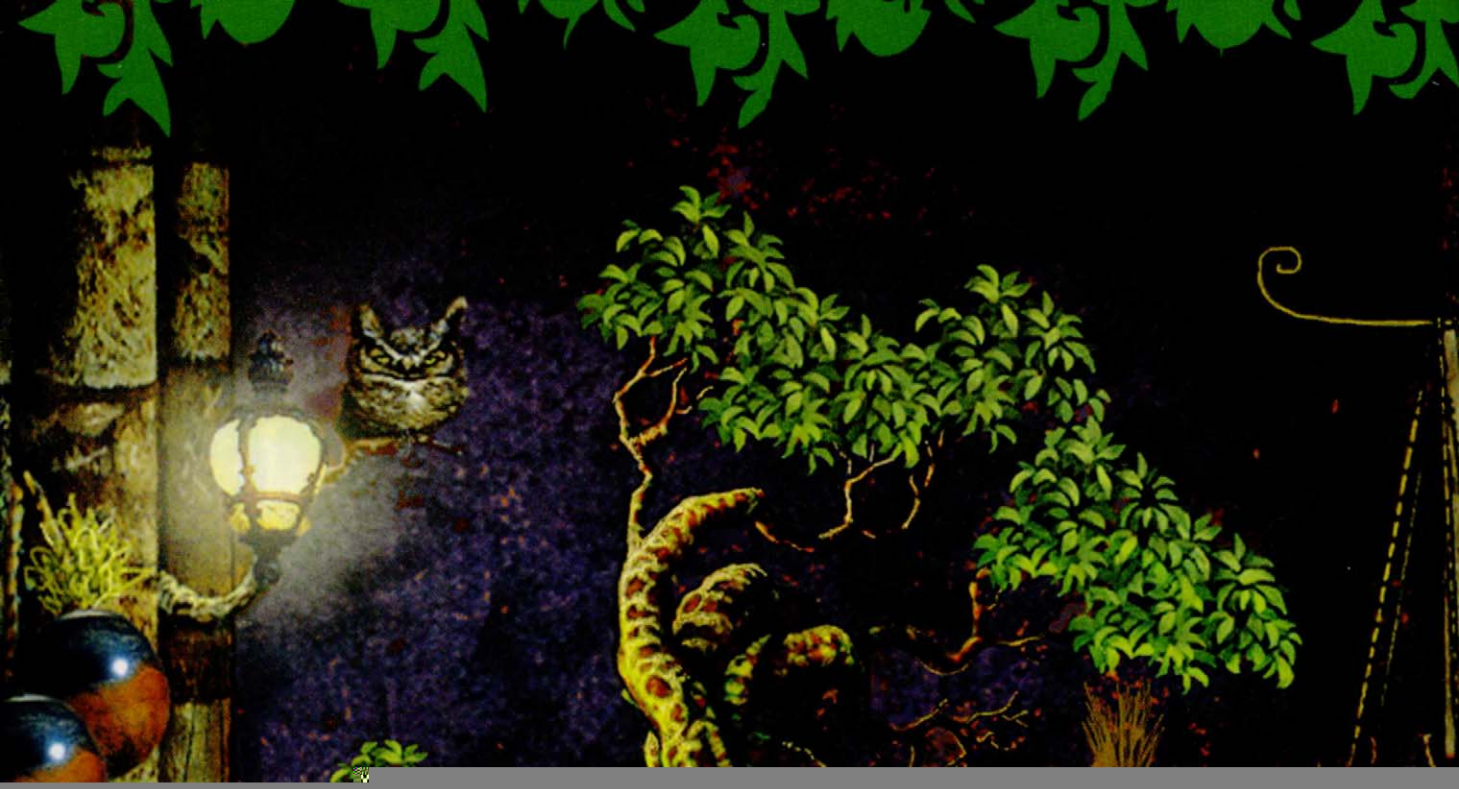
**In accordance with the *Player's Handbook*, a masterpiece performance must be music or poetics to grant this type of bonus. At the DM's option, bards can perform bardic music abilities in other ways, opening the door to things like masterpiece buffoonery used to *fascinate* creatures. Note that some of the masterpiece performances in this article use this concept.

†Penalties from mastering multiple masterpiece performances do not stack.

††This bonus or penalty cannot exceed +10 or -10. A limited Perform skill bonus applies only to skill checks with one type of instrument or only with one kind of audience. When the word "extra" appears, it refers to the amount of bonus or penalty in excess of the normal amount provided by the bardic music ability.

BUYING AND SELLING MASTERPIECE PERFORMANCES

Masterpiece performances have an inherent value just like magic items. They can be bought and sold like any other goods. Once a character has fully studied a masterpiece performance, he need not refer to the text again; it becomes worthless to him. Similarly, those without the desire to master the work have little reason to buy it. DMs might therefore consider making masterpiece performances a separate market among bards, composers, and collectors. Then again, a character who uses *bracers of armor +1* who then gains *bracers of armor +4* no longer has any use for her *bracers of armor +1;* they're worthless to her. Similarly, because so many adventurers wear armor, *bracers of armor +1* have little value to them. Thus the standard practice (and the simplest) is to assume that masterpiece performances have a normal market price value determined as outlined in this article, and they should be treated like any other item when characters buy, sell, or receive them as treasure.



From Field to Cauldron

ALCHEMY Begins in the Forest

by Kieran Turley with Jesse Decker · Illustrated by David Wahlstrom

Alchemists practice the arcane art of combining seemingly innocuous ingredients to produce substances with incredible properties. But where do these ingredients come from? A significant portion of what goes into an alchemist's labors can be found in the wilderness. Some of what is considered alchemy is sophisticated herb lore with an unusual twist. What the herbalist overlooks however, the alchemist treasures; for sometimes, when coupled with other reagents, even the most innocent weed can reveal astounding properties.

This article adds a new level of detail to the Alchemy skill and increases the variety of substances that alchemists can create. What follows are a list of herbs, fungi, roots, and plants that alchemists can use to produce new elixirs, powders, and poultices. The hunt for these wonders of nature can be a springboard to new adventures as characters travel to danger-filled lands searching for much-needed reagents.

Common Name

The first few sentences of a plant's description describe what the plant looks like and where it can be found. Subsequent sentences include general notes about the plant, including its common uses.

Alchemical Substance: This entry describes and defines the alchemical substance that the plant is used to make.

Alchemy DC to Create: The DC of the Alchemy skill check needed to successfully create the alchemical substance. See the Skills chapter in the *Player's Handbook* for more detail on creating alchemical items.

Market Value: The approximate market value of the finished product.

HEALTH AND HEALING

Midwives, wise men, and rural herbalists know many treatments for common ailments. Most of these treatments simply ease the symptoms of minor illnesses, allowing the body to rest and recover on its own, but a few show true efficacy in treating disease, injury, or even enchantment. These valuable remedies have been perfected and refined, and many have become alchemical reagents of note.

Wittlewort

A very fine herb with gossamer-like green fronds, wittlewort has a rapid growth cycle. Partly because of this rapid growth, it can be found only during spring months in temperate, subtropical, and tropical areas. Careful groundskeepers use it liberally in castle gardens, where it is grown to keep away slugs and other pests. However, only alchemical treatment can distill the full potency of this little plant. Once it has been dried, treated, and powdered, the alchemist dissolves the wittlewort in hot water to complete the alchemical process.

Wittlewort Brew: Wittlewort brew immediately grants creatures under the effects of Enchantment spells or effects another saving throw to resist those effects. If the Enchantment effect did not allow an initial saving throw, wittlewort brew has no effect.

Alchemy DC to Create: 15.
Market Value: 30 gp.

Cotsbalm

This fleshy-leafed plant, characterized by clusters of small yellow flowers, grows to a height of 1 foot. A hardy plant, it can be found throughout temperate and subtropical forests. Many hedge wizards and midwives use cotsbalm as a folk remedy when treating sick children. After crushing the flowers until they emit a sweet smell, the herbalist sprinkles them around the child's bed to draw out the illness. Priests and other skilled healers claim that this has no effect, but the practice persists in many communities.

Purebalm: Cotsbalm sap is extracted and used as a base for a clear, syrupy substance called purebalm. When applied to the skin of someone who has been poisoned by an injury or contact poison, purebalm turns black as it absorbs the poison out of the victim's system. Purebalm only functions when administered between the initial and secondary onset of an injury or contact poison. If applied before the secondary onset of an appropriate poison, purebalm provides a +8 alchemical bonus to the Fortitude saving throw to resist the poison's secondary effects.

Alchemy DC to Create: 35.
Market Value: 75 gp.

Musk Muddle

A brown, dead-looking plant with wide leaves and an unpleasant aroma, musk muddle can be found in nearly any swamp or marsh. Musk muddle

resembles the dock plant, a foul-smelling weed. Unlike many of the plants described here, musk muddle has no common use, making it shunned or exterminated by those familiar only with folk remedies.

Burn Salve: The boiled leaves from this plant form an integral part of burn salve, an excellent remedy for even severe burns. As its name implies, burn salve mitigates some of the effects of fire damage, but only if it is applied within 2 rounds of the injury. If applied in time, the smooth white salve heals 1d6 points of damage, but it cannot heal damage that was not inflicted by fire.

Alchemy DC to Create: 10.
Market Value: 15 gp.

Tyrant's Sword

A coarse, broad-leafed grass with sharp edges, tyrant's sword grows to a height of about 2 feet, distinguished only by the silvery edges of its leaves. Although difficult to find, it grows sporadically in both temperate plains and tundra regions. Tyrant's sword (named for its appearance) grows slowly and has a difficult time competing with other plants for survival. Because of this, it is usually found away from other plants.

Frost Lotion: The silvery edges of tyrant's sword can be boiled and used to make a warm, porridge-like substance called frost lotion. The pleasant-smelling topical heals injuries caused by extreme cold. Frost lotion can mitigate some of the effects of cold damage, but only if it is applied within 2 rounds of the injury. If applied in time, the thick lotion heals 1d6 points of damage, but it cannot heal damage that was not inflicted by cold.

Alchemy DC to Create: 10.
Market Value: 15 gp.

Prickly Tea

A small thorn bush with gray-green leaves, prickly tea rarely grows over 3 feet in height. Although it is almost never found in large groups, the thorny bush can be found throughout temperate and subtropical plains and forests. Prickly tea is a staple in church and abbey gardens because its leaves can be gathered, dried, and boiled to make a bitter tea that helps awaken the drinker and sharpen her senses. Early risers, as well as high-priced sentries, often drink the tea to stay alert.

Senses: An alchemist who knows the proper distillation techniques can create a powerful effect by refining normal prickly tea into a stronger, fouler-tasting substance known as senses. Senses sharpens the imbiber's eyes and ears, providing a +1 alchemical bonus to Spot and Listen checks for 1 hour.

Alchemy DC to Create: 25.
Market Value: 50 gp.

Sand Vine

A rope-like seaweed found in temperate or warmer coastal areas, sand vine resembles a long, inch-thick rope. The vine grows both above and below water level, and it commonly grows with its roots wrapped around a small rock. Sand vine is relatively rare and is found only in areas where the tides and waves are mild. Since sand vine retains its strength after being harvested and dried, small costal communities often cultivate it and braid it into long, sturdy rope.

Vine Oil: Living sand vine can be cut and its juices squeezed out. When combined with more common ingredients, this juice forms a weak local anesthetic called vine oil. When spread on bare skin, vine oil numbs the area, allowing the user to withstand great amounts of pain. While the effects of vine oil last, the user can function normally until reduced below -5 hit points, but when reduced below 0 hit points, he still loses 1 hit point per round. If reduced below -5 hit points, the user falls unconscious. When the user's hit point total falls below -10, the user dies. Creatures who have used vine oil within the last 24 hours cannot stabilize on their own, and many warriors have died while using this oil, succumbing to their injuries before an ally could reach them to staunch their wounds. The effects of vine oil last for 1 hour. Vine oil smells faintly of fish, and those who use it regularly can often be identified by its smell.

Alchemy DC to Create: 15.
Market Value: 50 gp.

Old Man's Friend

Old man's friend is a sticky-leafed herb that rarely grows above 2 inches in height. The herb can be found in huge beds (often 10 feet or more on a side) in temperate areas that get a lot of sunlight. Old man's friend is a strange herb that has an effect not unlike catnip except that it affects canines. Dog lovers have been known to cultivate small beds of this herb to keep their animals happy.

Gash Glue: Old man's friend can be crushed and mixed with a number of other substances to produce a thick, gray glue called gash glue. Soldiers often carry gash glue to seal a fallen companion's wounds quickly. One application of gash glue stabilizes a dying creature.

Alchemy DC to Create: 20.
Market Value: 40 gp.

Elven Willow

The elven willow is a small tree (maximum height 5 feet) that grows by the banks of rivers in temperate forests. The willow has a golden sheen to its bark and produces golden colored buds in the spring. There is much superstition concerning the elven willow. It is said that each elven willow bears the spirit of a love-lorn elf who drowned in a river near the tree.

Elf Hazel: The sap of the elven willow is the main component in a fluid called elf hazel. If elf hazel fluid is applied to any scar (from a now-healed wound) the scar slowly vanishes. It takes a week of daily applications for the scar to vanish completely.

Alchemy DC to Create: 10.
Market Value: 5 gp.

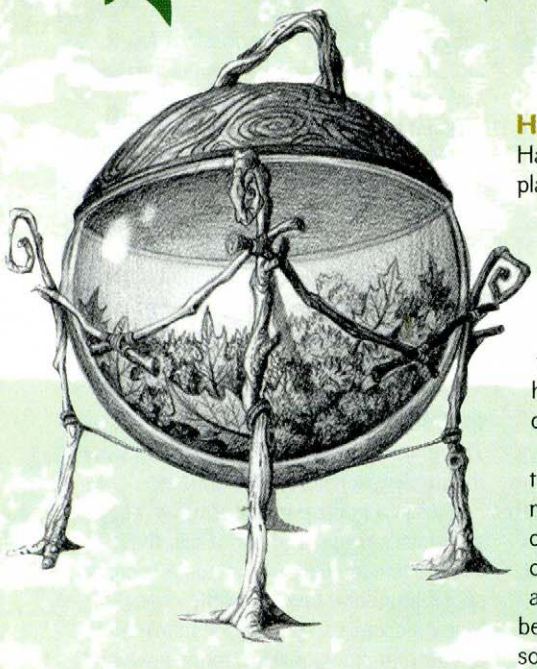
POISONS AND MALEFICS

The following substances, while not dangerous on their own, mix well with poisons, making the poisons harder to resist or adding dangerous side effects.

When adding one of these substances to a poison, a character without the poison

poison to make a potent additional

sanguine-enhanced poison often fail to



as bogs. The root grows to over 10 feet in length and can be up to 2 feet thick. Herbalists and village wise women advocate chewing darkroot as a way of purging the stomach after drinking or eating poisons. The root tastes vile and causes vomiting immediately upon swallowing.

Titan Gum: Darkroot is used in great quantities by alchemists in the production of titan gum, a particularly strong and fast-setting form of glue. Titan gum bonds completely in one round. Substances bonded by titan gum require a DC 20 Strength check to separate. Titan gum can support 500 lbs. of weight before breaking.

Alchemy DC to Create: 15.
Market Value: 25 gp.

Goblin Rouge

Goblin rouge is a moderately sized bush that produces hundreds of large yellow and orange berries every autumn. It can be found in nearly any temperate region. Goblin rouge bears its name because children frequently smear their faces with the yellow-orange juice of the berries to pretend they are goblins.

Goblin Ink: The juice of the goblin rouge berry can be used in the creation of a high-quality waterproof ink, sometimes called goblin ink after its origin. The waterproof goblin ink cannot be smeared or distorted by water after it dries. It is popular for public notices and is sometimes used in spellbooks or other works that will be exposed to the elements.

Alchemy DC to Create: 10.
Market Value: 20 gp.

Halfling Thistle

Halfling thistle is aptly named. This little plant is a breed of miniature thistle with a violet flower. The thistle grows to a height of only 3 inches. Halfling thistle grows in all temperate environments, especially highland areas. Bunches of dried halfling thistle make a popular decoration in halfling homes, and many halflings are quite proud of this hardy plant.

Shinewater: The heads of halfling thistles are used to create shinewater, a rust remover and polisher. Metal objects left in a bath of shinewater overnight shed all rust and corrosion, and they look highly polished after being dried and rubbed lightly with a soft cloth. One dose of shinewater is sufficient to de-rust one Medium-size metal weapon or a similarly sized object, and each bath is good for only one use.

Alchemy DC to Create: 5.
Market Value: 10 gp.

Cave Star

Cave Star is a luminous yellow lichen that can be found in caves of all sizes and depths. The lichen glows with a warm yellow light and can be found clustered together on the roofs of caves. In its normal environment, a patch the size of a door sheds less light than a candle. Cave star can be found in any chill underground environment, as it cannot bear normal temperature ranges. Cave star is a welcome sight to travelers in the underground realms but is also a danger because many predators are attracted to the lichen's light and cluster around the plant.

Lantern Stars: Cave star does not shed sufficient light for good vision on its own. However, when placed in fist-sized glass globes and soaked with other reagents, the lichen sheds light equal to a torch for a time, after which it burns out. These lanterns, called lantern stars, last for 4 hours before burning out. They do not give off heat or smoke, and the light is constant and unwavering. The lanterns are often used in areas where the fire from torches might light pockets of gas or where flickering light is insufficient.

Alchemy DC to Create: 10.
Market Value: 5 gp.

HERBS OF WAR

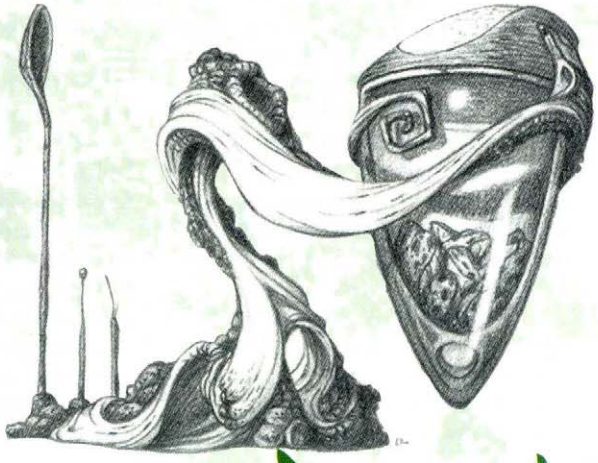
Often used by adventurers, these herbs produce substances that have uses as weapons or provide some protection against specific dangers. Wealthy adventuring groups usually keep some of these substances around to help deal with unusual situations.

Ice Lotus

The ice lotus is an unusual breed of flower that blooms only in the extreme climates found at the top of arctic mountains. The flower is a translucent blue-white in color, and it is never found in the company of others of its kind. Rumors persist that the ice lotus grows only where the blood of a white dragon has fallen. The adventurer Osolor of Helderfeld claimed to have seen an ice lotus blossom from the blood of the slain white dragon Dreadfrost. The veracity of this rumor is uncertain, as Osolor was a notorious con artist and cheat.

Icewalker Oil: The ice lotus is the key ingredient in a powerful alchemical substance called icewalker oil. If properly treated with alchemical reagents, ice lotus petals yield a thin blue liquid that grants uncanny ability to walk and climb on ice. The effects of icewalker oil are identical to the *spider climb* spell, but the substance functions only on icy or snow-covered surfaces. The effects of icewalker last for 10 minutes.

Alchemy DC to Create: 35.
Market Value: 75 gp.



Alchemy Item	Ingredient	DC	Cost	Effect
Burn salve	Muck muddle	10	15 gp	1d6 fire damage becomes subdual
Devil's soap	Stygian pumpkin	20	25 gp	Provides fire resistance 2
Dragon brew	Spotty dragonfire	25	15 gp	+1 to Fortitude saves
Elf hazel	Elven willow	10	5 gp	Removes scars
Frost lotion	Tyrant's sword	10	15 gp	1d6 cold damage becomes subdual
Gash glue	Old man's friend	15	40 gp	Stabilizes dying creature
Goblin ink	Goblin rogue	10	20 gp	Waterproof ink
Icewalker oil	Ice lotus	35	75 gp	*Spider climb* on ice only
Journeyman's Friend	Wolfweed	5	5 gp	+2 on Constitution checks from forced march
Lantern stars	Cave star	10	10 gp	Steady, heatless light
Memorybind	Pixie table	30	300 gp	Bonus 1st-level spell, -2 to spell DCs
Mindfire	Wild fireclover	30	200 gp	-2 Will save, Concentration to cast
Night venom	Orticusp	35	500 gp	Add sleep effect to poison
Oakdeath	Dwarven oak	25	100 gp	Poison DC increases by 2
Purebalm	Cotsbalm	25	175 gp	+8 vs. secondary poison
Senses	Prickly tea	25	50 gp	+1 to Spot and Listen checks
Shinewater	Halfling thistle	5	10 gp	Polishes metal easily
Titan gum	Darkroot	15	25 gp	Powerful glue
Vine oil	Sand vine	15	50 gp	Function below 0 hp
White sanguine	Meadow giant	20	100 gp	Wounds continue to bleed
Wittlewort brew	Wittlewort	15	30 gp	Chance to break Enchantment effect

Pixie Table

Pixie table is a rare mushroom with a distinctive appearance. This giant mushroom is over a foot tall and fans out to a flat top about a foot wide. The mushroom's cap is a dark shade of lavender. Although it can potentially grow in nearly any woodland, pixie table is found most often in temperate forests inhabited by fey. Pixie table mushroom caps can be boiled with cloth to dye it lavender. Undamaged pixie tables can sometimes be found for sale in rural markets as ingredients for the high-quality dye.

Memorybind: Pixie table is a crucial ingredient in a red liquid called memorybind. The thin liquid is famous among wizards, clerics, and other spellcasters who must prepare their spells. Memorybind increases a spellcaster's mental prowess, allowing him to prepare an additional 1st-level spell on the morning he drinks the liquid. Memorybind disrupts the natural flow of magic, however, reducing the DC of all spells the user casts during that day by 2.

Alchemy DC to Create: 30.
Market Value: 300 gp.

Spotty Dragonfire

Spotty dragonfire is a vivid flower with bright yellow, red, and orange petals. The plant stands about a foot high, and the flower stretches to about 6 inches in diameter. The wildflower rarely attracts much attention, however, because it only blooms at night. It can be found in any tropical, subtropical, or temperate region. Spotty dragonfire is a solitary plant with one exception; it seems to thrive in large numbers around the lairs of red dragons. Many an alchemist has met his death collecting the plants that the red dragons regard as good fortune. The retrieval of a number of these flowers is often a final test for dwaren apprentice alchemists.

Dragon Brew: Spotty dragonfire is used in the making of dragon brew, a thick liquid that increases stamina and numbs pain. A dose of dragon brew grants the imbiber a +1 alchemical bonus to all Fortitude saves for 1 hour.

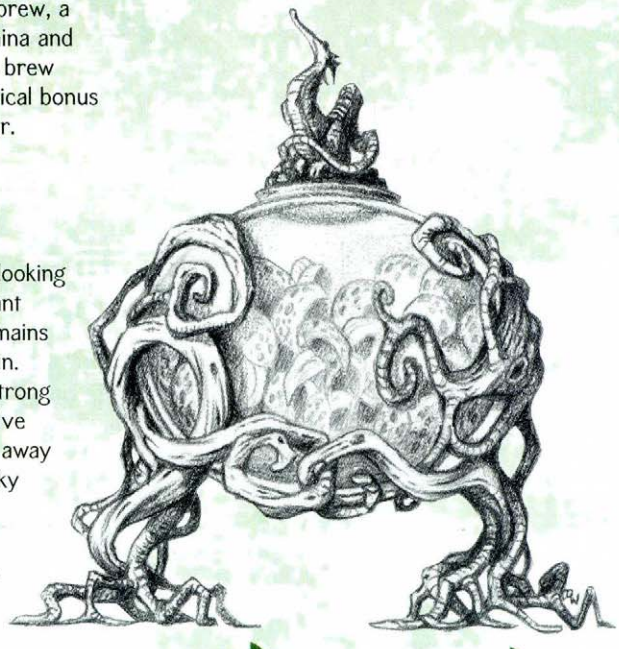
Alchemy DC to Create: 25.
Market Value: 50 gp.

Stygian Pumpkin

The stygian pumpkin is a foul-looking black and gray squash. The plant most closely resembles the remains of a dead and decayed pumpkin. The stygian pumpkin emits a strong smell of sulfur, and its distinctive smell is enough to keep it well away from cultivated lands. The stinky plant is very difficult to find, although it can potentially grow in any temperate region. Stygian pumpkins are foul plants cultivated by goblins and their ilk as a source of food. The plants grow rapidly and take over large areas of ground, rendering the soil poisonous to other plants.

Devil's Soap: The insides of a stygian pumpkin are used to make a foul-smelling, black paste called devil's soap. Devil's soap is a favorite of blacksmiths and those who work with fire. One application of devil's soap provides fire resistance 2. The effects of devil's soap last for 1 hour.

Alchemy DC to Create: 20.
Market Value: 25 gp.



MONTE

Malignant Growth

The Ecology of the Troll

by Paul Leach · illustrated by Monte Moore

Trolls are bestial giants driven by unrelenting hunger, occupying a niche between animal predators and the rest of giantkind. These rubber-skinned brutes prize strength, and they lust for slaughter and destruction, caring little for anything else. Secure in the knowledge that most creatures cannot inflict lasting injuries on them, they fight fearlessly. Despite these characteristics, trolls have the capacity to reason, and they can think beyond their next meal—although when one is at hand, they tend to concentrate on it to the exclusion of everything else.

It's easy to come to the conclusion that trolls aren't much more than regenerating eating machines, but the role they play in your campaign doesn't have to be as simple as that. They can be found skulking about the wilderness alone or in small gangs, but they are also encountered in the service of evil humanoids, giants, or even more powerful monsters. Exceptional trolls that advance in character classes can be encountered as well; most often they are leaders or otherwise special members of a tribe, but they might also be unique NPC enemies or allies.

Trolls in the World

Trolls live in every climate on the surface and inhabit the Underdark as well. They typically operate within a 10-mile radius of their lairs, although those that live in subterranean areas are often more restricted in their excursions. They are not overly territorial with creatures other than trolls, considering any creature willing to place itself within the reach of their claws and teeth a good thing. They often live semi-nomadic lives, moving on when they have depleted a nearby settlement of all humanoids and domesticated herds, and if wild fish and game are scarce. Unless driven away by powerful enemies, a troll will most likely return to its former haunts when food is plentiful again.

Trolls have no natural enemies, but some monsters prey on trolls like they would any other creature. Only a few of these actually give a troll cause to fear for its life: ankhegs, dragons, oozes, remorhazes, and purple worms. Any creature large enough to swallow a troll (whole or in pieces) and digest it with strong stomach acids encourages caution in a troll. Trolls are fearful of incorporeal undead as well, especially shadows. Most good races seek to kill or drive away trolls whenever they encounter them, as it is a fair assumption the trolls will eat them if given the chance.

A Troll's Life

The natural lifespan of trolls is approximately 100 years, and they reach maturity after just 10 years, although they can hunt and fend for themselves within a year after birth. The young learn mostly by harsh experience, but they are taught to fear fire and to revere only the evil gods they emulate, namely Vaprak the Destroyer and Erythnul the Many. Trolls grow up nasty and determined, scornful of other races, whom they consider food.

A troll's ability to express itself is often limited to asserting dominance over the weaker members of its tribe through violence, although some like to draw on cave walls or other similar surfaces as a pastime. The drawings (etched in charcoal, blood, clay, or filth) are usually scenes of hunts or wars, and they often contain references to the dark gods the trolls worship. Trolls do not typically engage in crafts of any sort, most of them not even bothering to fashion crude garments for themselves.

Much of their activities focus on acquiring food, whether exploring their habitats for sources of meat, preparing ambushes, or actually tracking prey. These hunters tend to be nocturnal, but they can be active any time of the day. Their scent and darkvision abilities allow them to hunt prey at night, when some of their intended meals might be at a disadvantage. If possible, a hungry troll will attempt to consume a meal on the spot, but it will take food back to its lair if necessary.

Trolls mate irregularly, and their birth rate is low as a result. The courtship ritual is initiated by a dominant female and is often nothing more than a brawl with any competing females to impress prospective mates. Sometimes the female presents her intended with a kill

for them to share (a troll otherwise never shares a meal if it can help it). A mating is most likely to produce offspring when the mother has access to enormous amounts of food, since pregnant trolls become even more hungry and vicious. The year-long gestation rarely results in more than one troll newborn.

Wealth

Trolls do not normally learn a craft, nor do they engage in commerce or till the soil as a way of life. They collect treasure, usually by theft or plunder, but sometimes they earn it. They don't view coins as a means to acquire material comforts and goods, but as something to measure their power and worth. Trolls love magic items, and they are considered more valuable than platinum coins when it comes to measuring one's worth, especially if the item can be used as a powerful weapon to intimidate other trolls.

Society

Troll society is limited to small clans or even single families, as they are too chaotic and violent to sustain order in a larger group. Small family groups allow for manageable hunting parties and provide some kind of mutual protection for the individual members. As females are stronger than males, most clans are matriarchal.

Inter-tribal relations are normally limited to random meetings to share news or to trade males or valuable magic items. In other societies, family members are ritualistically given to other families in formal fosterage or marriage alliances. Most clans do not trespass on another clan's territory unless spoiling for a fight. Temporary agreements can be reached when fighting a common enemy or if there is plenty of humanoid prey to go around.

Troll culture and history is maintained through oral tradition. Each clan attributes a divine origin to its founder, with its Great Mother often being a daughter of Vaprak. They believe themselves superior to the other giant races because they have maintained their connection to the primal, chaotic forces of the earth by emulating its ability to destroy and regenerate. Several giant mythologies acknowledge elder creator gods, many of whom are no longer actively worshiped. The trolls are no different, and their legends speak of a dark Earth Mother.

Lairs

Troll dens are often a series of two to four connected natural caverns. They do little to improve the living conditions in their caves, although they might conceal or bar the entrance to their lairs. They generally look for caves that have small mouths (about 5 ft. x 5 ft.) and narrow, winding entry tunnels. Trolls typically disguise the entrance to their lairs with large boulders or a pile of earth and brush. Trolls like dens that offer strewn boulders or stalactites and stalagmites, as they can use these to set ambushes, and the tribal adept can fling spells while protected by their cover.

Trolls prefer caves that have two entrances, especially if they allow the trolls to leave by one and easily return by the other. Such a troll den presents a greater threat to adventurers, since they might find themselves quickly cut off from escape once a troll circles

around behind them. The second entrance to a troll's lair is usually a natural crevice or shaft, as it can also serve as a trap to unwary adventurers. A troll can turn the shaft into a trap simply by not disguising its tracks when returning from hunting and then making sure its trail leads over the brush-covered hole. The trap can be made more dangerous by setting wooden spikes or even a *glyph of warding* on the cave floor.

Killer Creature Combos

Trolls are often found in the company of other creatures, either serving as henchmen and servants or as partners.

Troll and a Trap: Trolls aren't particularly concerned with falling damage, so they are often willing to grapple a PC and take the foe over the edge of a pit or cliff. A single troll and a 60-foot-deep pit trap is an EL 6 encounter.

Troll and Troglodytes: A troll can add some extra muscle to a troglodyte encounter. With the troll's good Fortitude saving throw, it's not likely to succumb to their stench. Although these two species don't normally associate with one other, the drow often employ both races, giving them cause to work together. This group might be found in drow service, or they might simply be veterans who have left the drow but continue to work together. A troll and six troglodytes make for an EL 7 encounter.

Ogre Mage and Trolls: An ogre mage might use trolls to soften up its opponents while it remains invisible, waiting for an opportune moment to cast *cone of cold* into the melee (the trolls don't like this, but they can regenerate the damage). If the PCs easily resist the trolls' attacks, the ogre mage makes its cold attack before the trolls take too much damage. Otherwise, it waits until the PCs are thoroughly weakened before it frosts them and charges into melee. An ogre mage and three trolls is an EL 10 encounter.

Drow Wizard and Trolls: An 8th-level drow wizard could support her troll servants (four regular trolls and one 4th-level troll rogue) in combat by keeping the PCs occupied with her strong defensive position while she sets them up for an ambush. Surrounding herself with her regular trolls, she casts *minor globe of invulnerability* to protect them from magical fire attacks and mind-controlling spells. She casts *fly* and *improved invisibility* on the troll rogue so that it can deliver sneak attacks to the PC spellcasters. The wizard further assists her trolls with such spells as *bull's strength, haste,* or *protection from elements.* This is an EL 12 encounter.

Fire Giant Cleric and Trolls: A 5th-level fire giant cleric might deploy his troll slave guards (six regular trolls with a 7th-level barbarian leader) against the PCs. He uses *protection from elements* to ward himself against cold-based attacks, and he casts *resist elements* on the troll barbarian to help against fire-based attacks. The remaining trolls simply work to distract the party and help the giant and the barbarian make flanking attacks. This is an EL 16 encounter.

HALF-FIEND/HALF-TROLL

Vs. PCs

Troll combat tactics revolve around their multiple attacks, regeneration ability, and their hunger. They rarely use weapons, as their natural attacks are comparable, if not superior, to most weapon damage. The exception is a troll that has received special training and taken a level in a character class, or if the weapon is magical and particularly powerful. Trolls typically don't have a reason to hang back from a melee unless prevented from closing by fire or other powerful barriers.

The information below describes how best to use a troll's abilities and tactics, and is intended to help a DM run a troll NPC. Players should skip this section and instead read the Vs. Trolls section later in this article for information on battling trolls.

Entrapment: Trolls like to set ambushes if the terrain allows, attempting to herd prey into a dead end or over a deep pit. This tactic is most often used in their cave lairs and is easily accomplished by overrunning the PCs and cutting off their only means of escape. When hunting humanoids in the wilderness, trolls might be patient enough to wait until their prey reaches difficult or impassable terrain, such as rivers, thick brush, or canyons. When the trolls' patience runs out, if they get too hungry, or if they suspect they have been detected by their prey, they give up on the ambush and simply charge.

Into the Fray: The overrun tactic mentioned above has other uses, as it is a good way to reach enemy spellcasters who use magical fire. Most trolls are not concerned about provoking attacks of opportunity when they charge the front rank of warriors. As trolls have extended reach, they can also do some damage to PCs who hope to gain protection behind the group's fighters.

Bring 'Em Down: After charging in to reach its prey, a troll usually attempts to grapple it. With the troll's high Strength, it's likely that the troll will succeed. It can then use its natural attacks with grapple checks, following up with its rend ability.

To Each His Own: There is little cooperation among trolls, each being concerned with feeding itself. Trolls rarely give aid to their allies unless they are following the commands of a fearsome leader.

Trolls With Class

There are some trolls who stand out above the others in brute strength, intelligence, or determination. These trolls seek specialized training and advance in character classes. While a troll can take a level in any class, assuming it meets the alignment and ability requirements, trolls generally only train as barbarians, clerics,

ROCK TROLL

fighters, and rogues. Below are suggestions and tactics for NPC trolls that have levels in these classes.

Barbarian: This class is well suited to trolls, the ability to rage and quickly pursue fleeing opponents at 1st level makes these monsters more menacing than usual. For their feats, troll barbarians tend to take Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Run, and Weapon Focus (claw). Climb, Swim, and Wilderness Lore are the best skills for a troll barbarian, as they allow the creature to better navigate natural obstacles between it and its prey.

Cleric: Only exceptional trolls take a level in this class, mainly because of the high Wisdom required to cast even the weakest divine spells. Most clerics are leaders of their small tribes. Their spellcasting abilities offer them more flexibility than the battle tactics used by most trolls, but like other trolls, they eagerly jump into melee combat as soon as possible. They cast protective spells on themselves before combat and then proceed to attack enemy spellcasters or exceptionally dangerous fighters with offensive spells. Once they have exhausted their repertoire (it's possible a troll might withhold a spell or two), they make melee attacks. Clever clerics who've encountered adventurers before might employ special tricks, such as using the ready action to cast *shatter* on the first PC to pull out a flask of alchemist's fire, causing the PC to suffer a direct hit when the flask explodes in his hands. The PC's problems are compounded if he carries other flasks, as they are subject to the spell's radius. Trolls with access to *summon monster III* are likely to bring a water elemental to the fight, giving some measure of control over PC pyrotechnics. Troll clerics often cast *hold person* on fighters and other strong melee-minded opponents, but some trolls attempt to use this spell against spellcasters, hoping to overcome a good Will save for a very dramatic success. Troll clerics do not worry about missing any early kills, as they have sufficient power to force lesser trolls to give up a meal.

Troll clerics favor the Combat Casting feat, but they've also been known to take the Brew Potion and Empower Spell feats, along with any of the feats commonly taken by troll barbarians. They allot most of their skill points to Concentration but occasionally take ranks in Knowledge (religion) and Spellcraft.

Trolls prefer spells that protect them from fire and acid, enhance their combat abilities, and harm enemies. Outside of their ability to rebuke undead, troll clerics do not care much for spells that combat or create undead; they don't hunt undead for food, and they don't leave much of their victims to animate. Many troll clerics worship either Erythnul or Vaprak, allowing them access to domains that support bloodletting, with most choosing Evil and War (Erythnul's clerics) or Destruction and Strength (Vaprak's clerics). Like PC clerics, trolls might choose to worship religious concepts, but care should be taken in allowing domain choices to favor game advantages over good roleplaying. For instance, the Water domain is appropriate for scrags (aquatic trolls), but to give it to a land troll seems only like a way to give it the ability to rebuke fire creatures.

Listed below are common spell choices for a troll cleric of up to 5th level.

0: *inflict minor wounds, resistance;* 1st: *bane, bless, divine favor, doom, endure elements, magic stone, protection from good, shield of faith, summon monster I;* 2nd: *bull's strength, darkness, endurance, hold person, inflict moderate wounds, resist elements, shatter, summon monster II;* 3rd: *deeper darkness, dispel magic, glyph of warding, inflict serious wounds, prayer, protection from elements, stone shape, summon monster III.*

Fighter: This class is not as popular with trolls as the barbarian class, but its disciplined style appeals to trolls that serve as mercenaries to hobgoblins and fire giants. Troll fighters take many of the same feats as troll barbarians, but especially Power Attack, Cleave, and Great Cleave. Many also take the Weapon Specialization (claw) feat. Troll fighters spend their skill points on Climb, Jump, and Swim, rarely taking ranks in any other skill.

Rogue: The ability to make sneak attacks and evade *fireballs* comes in handy. A troll rogue usually spends most of its skill points on the Hide and Move Silently skills, and a few clever rogues use the Craft (trapmaking) skill to set traps in their lairs for unwary adventurers.

VAPRAK THE DESTROYER

Vaprak is the chaotic evil patron deity of trolls and ogres, and he embodies the strength and ferocity that both races find appealing. Other giants worship him as well, especially brutish ettins and hill giants. The Destroyer appears as an extremely large troll (about 15 feet tall) and his claws are stained with the blood of those he has slaughtered. Vaprak is worshiped in caves and where the enemies of his followers are killed and eaten. His clerics have access to the domains of Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and Strength. The claws is his favored weapon.

PC Trolls

This is not an easy race to integrate into a campaign, especially if most of the PCs are from the standard races listed in the *Player's Handbook*. Since they have an ECL of 11, the PC troll should be introduced only when the other characters are of similar level. A PC troll shouldn't be restricted to the chaotic evil alignment, but even a good troll will be viewed with suspicion and hatred by most civilized folk. Trolls are not socially acceptable except in the

roughest of company, such as mercenary or adventurer bands. If traveling alone, a troll PC should expect to be driven from town.

A troll might take a chance outside of barbarian lands to amass wealth, fame, and power to enable it to better control its savage kin when it decides to go back home (not unlike some half-orcs). A small kingdom bordering monster-inhabited lands could be a source of employment, offering coins and cattle to gain a mercenary who is intimately familiar with the kingdom's enemies. As another possibility, the troll might join the PCs in a quest against a common enemy.

Vs. Trolls

Trolls rarely show restraint when given the opportunity to eat humanoids. Adventurers willing to go on troll hunts often find themselves as the quarry. With luck, the right armory of spells and weapons, and some good strategic planning, your adventuring company can defeat these monsters, or at least escape with their lives.

Preparation

Although fire and acid are what ultimately destroy a troll, every member of an adventuring party can contribute to the demise of this bloodthirsty, regenerating foe.

Fire spells: *Fireball* is an excellent choice to use against trolls, but there are other fire-based spells to employ against these brutes. Area effect spells are best, such as *acid fog, fire storm,* and *flame strike.* If these spells aren't available, cast *web.* Once the troll is trapped by the spell, any member of the party can quickly set the creature on fire with a simple torch. *Flaming sphere* is useful for impeding trolls, and *fire shield* and *wall of fire* might keep them at bay, or at the very least, do some damage to them if they can't be swayed from charging in to eat your PC. *Fire seeds* and *glyph of warding* (set for fire damage) are useful to cover a retreat or set an ambush, as is *fire trap* if there is a door between you and the trolls. Don't forget *burning hands, flame arrow,* or *flame blade.* The Empower Spell feat improves these damaging spells. Since trolls don't have great Reflex saves (only +4), they will take the heat most of the time.

Other spells: Trolls have poor Will saves but great Fortitude saves, so take advantage of spells that require Will saves. Some that are useful for incapacitating or driving away trolls include: *charm monster, fear, hold monster, sleep, slow,* and *suggestion. Command* and *color spray* are good for only a short while, but they are still handy at times. Surprisingly, *bestow curse* might be the best spell for knocking out trolls; with their low Intelligence and Charisma scores (typically a 6 for both abilities), a failed save drops a troll to 0 points in either ability, putting the monster in a "comalike stupor," (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Used cleverly, an illusion can save the day by drawing the trolls away from the party or into a trap, but don't forget that they have the scent ability or your illusion might be useless.

Fiendish Troll

Melee: When fighting a troll, it is important to have feats and weapons that cause a lot of damage, otherwise it's almost impossible to keep up with the troll's regeneration ability. The Power Attack feat is a must, and Weapon Specialization, with its additional +2 to damage, is useful for fighters. Greatswords and greataxes are ideal for close combat, but don't underestimate longspears and polearms, which are useful for their reach capabilities. Preventing just one of the troll's claw attacks from hitting can save a character from the troll's deadly rend attack, so good armor or magic protection is paramount. Dwarf and gnome fighters get a +4 Dodge bonus against giants and should have a healthy number of hit points to boot, making them ideal companions to have around when hunting trolls.

Ranged Attacks: Most normal missile attacks are worthless against trolls unless they are followed by some of the more powerful tactics and attacks listed above; it does no good to rely on only shooting a handful of arrows at a troll, because before you can do more damage on your next turn, the troll has most likely regenerated and is back to its normal hit point total. Flasks of alchemist's fire and acid are noteworthy exceptions to this guideline, despite their short range. Tanglefoot bags can be useful as well.

Coup de Grace: Be sure to save some fire and acid for coup de grace actions on fallen trolls. Only an attack that deals normal damage to a troll (fire and acid) can be used for a coup de grace.

Tactics

Once you find some trolls, or they find you (as is most often the case), the encounter will likely continue until the trolls are completely wiped out or flee when they come to the conclusion they are truly outmatched and you can destroy them. Don't expect parley attempts to bring much success unless you back it up with magical mind control or obvious raw power.

Fire Away: Use long-range fire attacks on any trolls you encounter. This causes them normal damage not subject to their regeneration ability. If you cannot blast them with high-damage, area-effect spells, consider concentrating weak fire attacks against one or two trolls instead of trying to reach the entire gang. Area effect spells are most efficient when the trolls are squeezed into confined tunnels and dungeon halls.

Within Claw's Reach: It's wise to take advantage of ranged fire attacks when fighting trolls, but don't be afraid to put tough fighters right next to them. Fighters should be backed up with a second rank of characters who have

Slime Troll

reach weapons and spells. Be sure to save the alchemist's fire for desperate situations: Unless your melee combatants have hit points to spare, they'll want to avoid splash damage. If it is possible to surround a troll, do so unless it opens you up to flank attacks. If you have no other choice but to let the fighting front ranks administer a torch or acid coup de grace, sacrifice the next melee attack and chance an attack of opportunity from the next troll; if the downed troll regenerates back to 1 hp, he inflicts as much damage as the fresh troll.

Attack, Evade, or Feign Retreat: If your party can reduce the trolls' ranks or at least a lot of their hit points with ranged attacks, consider charging the trolls while they are weakened. If you need to fall back due to losses or you want to trick your enemy and feign retreat, spellcasters can make things unpleasant for pursuing trolls by using the *glyph of warding* and *fire seed* spells. This is a good time to counter attack if the trolls are sufficiently damaged, even if you do intend to run again.

Defensible Positions: Don't let the trolls push you into a dead end or surround you. Once they've managed to do so, you have no choice but to fight your way through them. If a troll manages to get in close to your spellcasters while others are attacking your fighters, your spellcasters might have no other choice but to hit the nearby troll with melee weapons or magic spells that hit only one target. Meanwhile, the other trolls don't have to face the attacks of your spellcasters while they chew up the fighters. This is a good time for the rogue to make some flank attacks; it should be the rogue's responsibility to provide security for the spellcasters.

THE SAVAGE CLAW

The savage claw (cleric/barbarian) is a religious devotee who revels in divinely inspired rages. A savage claw worships either Vaprak or Erythnul, assuming the title of Savage Claw of the Destroyer or Savage Claw of the Slayer, respectively. A savage claw is often the leader of his tribe and sometimes has enough power to rule several tribes of trolls and ogres, at least for a limited time.

At lower levels, the savage claw spends more time focusing on his cleric levels, although he does take a level of barbarian early in his training. This progression allows him to gain spells quickly and improve his weak Will save while still gaining the ability to rage. As the savage claw advances, he follows a more even progression of training, alternating between the cleric and barbarian classes. This progression works well since most trolls do not have the necessary Wisdom scores to take full advantage of the more powerful cleric spells.

Savage claws usually begin combat by placing protection spells upon themselves or targeting enemy spellcasters with offensive spells. They then fly into a rage and hurl themselves into melee.

SAVAGE CLAW STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

(Compared to the single-classed barbarian)

Advantages

Ability to cast spells

Better Will saves

Disadvantages

Fewer hit points (this is not a big disadvantage considering a troll's starting HD, Constitution bonus, and regeneration ability)

Can't rage as often

Does not gain access to barbarian's higher-level abilities

SAVAGE CLAW ADVANCEMENT

Level	Class Level	Base Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Abilities Gained
1	Clr 1	+0	+2	+0	+2	0- and 1st-level spells, rebuke undead
2	Clr 1/Bar 1	+1	+4	+0	+2	Rage 1/day, fast movement
3	Clr 2/Bar 1	+2	+5	+0	+3	Feat
4	Clr 3/Bar 1	+3	+5	+1	+3	2nd-level spells
5	Clr 3/Bar 2	+4	+6	+1	+3	Uncanny dodge
6	Clr 4/Bar 2	+5	+7	+1	+4	Feat
7	Clr 4/Bar 3	+6/+1	+7	+2	+5	
8	Clr 5/Bar 3	+6/+1	+7	+2	+5	3rd-level spells
9	Clr 5/Bar 4	+7/+2	+8	+2	+5	Rage 2/day, Feat
10	Clr 6/Bar 4	+8/+3	+9	+3	+6	

Claw of Gold

by Andy Collins - illustrated by Todd Harris

Most thieves' guilds focus their operations on short-term projects: burglaries, street robberies, blackmail, begging, and the like. Savvier guildmasters might set up ongoing projects, such as protection rackets or false storefronts for money laundering. Few, however, take a truly long-term approach to their illegal activities, thinking that a gold coin in the hand is worth at least two in someone else's purse.

The Claw of Gold is an exception to this. The master of this guild isn't interested merely in lining his pockets. He seeks to establish a long-lived dynasty, a bloodline of power to reckon with kings and high priests alike.

Such an outlook takes extraordinary patience and strength of will. Thuulsias, Master of the Claw of Gold, has both to spare, for he is the son of an elven mother and a green dragon father.

Thuulsias (male half-green dragon elf Rog17, LE) combines the best (or, as some might say, the worst) aspects of his parents. From his mother, the guildmaster inherited a cautious patience and the knack of maximizing his advantages before risking anything. From his father, Thuulsias acquired power and cunning, as well as a love of wealth. Together, these elements have created a being of deadly skill who knows how to get whatever he wants.

After settling in a wealthy metropolis, Thuulsias began assembling an organization of allies to help him realize his ultimate goal. Even among the Claw of Gold, few know of his most secret plans, and the few who do have little insight into the future of the guild.

SIZE AND RESOURCES

The Claw of Gold numbers 182 members among its ranks, making it a medium-sized organization. As time goes on, Thuulsias continues to add slowly to this number, sometimes adding as little as a single person in one year. Of course, he'll replace losses more quickly should someone interfere with his plans.

In any given week, the Claw of Gold can afford to spend up to 50,000 gp in resources on various tasks. This makes them extremely capable of responding to emergencies quickly and efficiently. Since the group's income depends directly on its membership, any significant membership reduction (10% or more) in a given week reduces their ability to spend resources by a similar percentage.

ALIGNMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Thuulsias is the unquestioned leader of the Claw of Gold. The organization is lawful evil, with each member knowing his place and rarely, if ever, straying from his duty. Each lieutenant oversees operations within a different area of the city and draws guild members from the group as needed for specific missions.

Since the guild prefers to work within the law—at least as far as an evil organization can—the group gets along reasonably well with local authorities. Although some suspect the group doesn't have the citizens' best interests in mind, few are brave enough to tangle with the group publicly. Of

course, that doesn't stop some officials from using unofficial channels—such as hired adventurers—to handle covert operations against the guild.

MEMBERSHIP AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In building his organization, Thuulsias has taken a long-term approach. While his earliest recruits, back in the budding days of the guild, were little more than mercenaries, he has slowly and methodically constructed an integrated network of talented, trusted followers who show him unquestioning loyalty. In fact, many of the half-dragon's lieutenants are his own children, the result of couplings with hand-picked individuals over the years. Although not true half-dragons, these children nonetheless bear traces of their draconic heritage. (See the Draconic Template section for more information on adding this template to a character.)

Among his most trusted lieutenants is his eldest daughter, Sybaria (female draconic human Sor14). In addition to leading all business in the royal quarter, she often serves as Thuulsias's voice when he isn't present. Many in the group consider her words to carry as much weight as the guildmaster's. Sybaria frequently picks lovers from the organization, and her current paramour is Garriq (male elf Ftr6/Rog3), the head of guild security. For his part, Thuulsias approves of these liaisons, hoping that they will create the next generation of guild members. In fact, Sybaria's son Ikris (male draconic human Rog2) is generally regarded as the "golden child" of the organization—to the distaste of some.

Thuulsias knows the importance of capitalizing on faith to build loyalty. He strongly encourages all members to attend regular religious services at the guild's temple, run by Nygitheron (male troglodyte Clr8). The high priest secretly worries that Thuulsias plots to replace him with the half-dragon's son Antherra (male draconic halfling Clr4). So far, Nygitheron hasn't let this worry affect his loyalty. Two underpriests (male and female human Clr2) and four acolytes (human Clr1) also serve in the temple, and the fanatically devout Herstia Karonyx (female human War4) guards it.

Durkin Brecht (male draconic dwarf Exp6/Rog4) oversees operations in the guild and merchant quarters of the city. He often calls upon the services of the guild's forgery expert, Grimpin (halfling male Exp5). The guild also runs a completely legal alchemist's shop in the area, operated by a husband and wife team (male and female human Exp2) who funnel illicit shipments through the storefront to the guild. The shop's lone guard (female gnome War2) is also a member.

Operations in the lower quarter and dockside area proceed under the close supervision of Brin Alyanis (draconic human male War8), who is generally regarded as the most aggressive—though not necessarily the most competent—of Thuulsias's lieutenants. Brin never uses one agent when four can make much more noise and destruction. Thuulsias has begun to consider replacing Brin, perhaps with an up-and-coming rogue from the lower ranks.

Thuulsias's only lieutenant who has no blood relation to him is Mariath Wyendin (female halfling Rog8), who heads up guild activities in the foreign quarter. Thuulsias is grooming her as his next mate, believing that she would bear him fine, smart children. She prefers to use strongarm tactics in her operations, often employing the talents of Osoria (male half-elf Sor7) and his daughter Terrelya (female half-elf Ftr4).

One of the few wild cards in the Claw of Gold is Kruumeesh (female draconic half-orc Mnk5), another of Thuulsias's children. On the one hand, no one denies that the half-orc's fighting skills make her incredibly valuable to the organization. On the other hand, some have begun to quietly question her commitment to the cause.

Most of the organization's members are human (79%), with the rest being halfling (9%), elf (5%), dwarf (3%), gnome (2%), or other (2%). These agents serve a variety of functions as needed. At your option, any number of these members might be children of Thuulsias who strive prove their worth to their father.

IN THE CAMPAIGN

The Claw of Gold is easy to drop into any metropolis in your campaign. Simply adjust the information above as needed. Avoid the temptation to use the Claw of Gold as you would any other illegally minded organization—remember that Thuulsias has the patience and foresight to take the long-term approach to solving problems. If he can avoid taking unnecessary risks, even by waiting months for an opportunity, he will certainly do so.

For instance, while the Claw of Gold engages in many of the typical thieves' guild operations, it takes time to plan them well, accounting for guard rotations, creating multiple getaway plans, and building layers of deception between the agents and the core group. Thus, a captured thief likely won't be able to tell his captors who gave him his orders or who was to profit from his activities.

Of course, not every one of his minions has Thuulsias's outlook, and some might act rashly. Even these instances, however, should be rare aberrations in behavior, as the half-dragon has taken long pains to ensure that his followers are unquestioningly loyal.

Claw of Gold

Claw of Gold (Medium): AL LE; 50,000 gp resource limit; Membership 182; Mixed (human 142, halfling 16, elf 9, dwarf 5, gnome 5, other 5).

Authority Figures: Thuulsias, male half-dragon elf rog17; Sybaria, female draconic human Sor14.

Important Characters: Garriq, male elf Ftr6/Rog3; Ikris, male draconic human Rog2; Nygitheron, male troglodyte Clr8; Antherra, male draconic halfling Clr4; Herstia Karonyx, female human War4; Durkin Brecht, male draconic dwarf Exp6/Rog4; Grimpin, halfling male Exp5; Brin Alyanis, draconic human male War8; Mariath Wyendin, female halfling Rog8; Osoria, male half-elf Sor7; Terrelya, female half-elf Ftr4; Kruumeesh, female draconic half-orc Mnk5.

Others: Mixed; Clr2 (2), Clr1 (4), Exp2 (2), Exp1 (4), Ftr2 (2), Ftr1 (4), Rgr2 (1), Rgr1 (2), Rog4 (2), Rog2 (3), Rog1 (8), Sor3 (2), Sor1 (4), War1 (5), War2 (2).

DRACONIC TEMPLATE

Draconic creatures are descended from a dragon ancestor, although that ancestor might be many generations removed.

Draconic creatures often bear hints of their heritage, such as slitted pupils or talonlike nails. They are sometimes mistaken for half-dragons.

It isn't necessary to determine the source of a draconic creature's heritage (unlike with half-dragons), since the creature doesn't gain any abilities directly related to its dragon ancestor (such as a resistance to a certain type of energy).

Creating a Draconic Creature

"Draconic" is a template that can be added to any living corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature") except dragons. Beasts or animals with this template become magical beasts, but otherwise the creature type is unchanged.

A draconic creature uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

AC: Natural armor improves by +1.

Damage: Draconic creatures have claw attacks. If the base creature does not have these attack forms, use the damage values in the table below. Otherwise, use the values below or the base creature's damage, whichever is greater.

Size	Claw Damage
Up to Tiny	1
Small	1d2
Medium-size	1d3
Large	1d4
Huge	1d6
Gargantuan	1d8
Colossal	1d10

Special Qualities: A draconic creature has all the special qualities of the base creature, plus low-light vision and darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Saves: A draconic creature gains a +4 racial bonus to saves against sleep and paralysis, thanks to its heritage.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +2, Cha +2.

Skills: Draconic creatures gain a +2 racial bonus to Intimidate and Spot checks.

Climate/Terrain: Same as base creature.

Organization: Solitary or as part of base creature's organization

Challenge Rating: Up to 5 HD, as base creature, 6 HD+ as base creature +1

Treasure: Same as the base creature

Alignment: Same as the base creature

Advancement: Same as the base creature

Draconic Characters

Draconic creatures with a Charisma of 12 or higher who are capable of gaining levels are often sorcerers. Draconic characters have a level adjustment of +1. D

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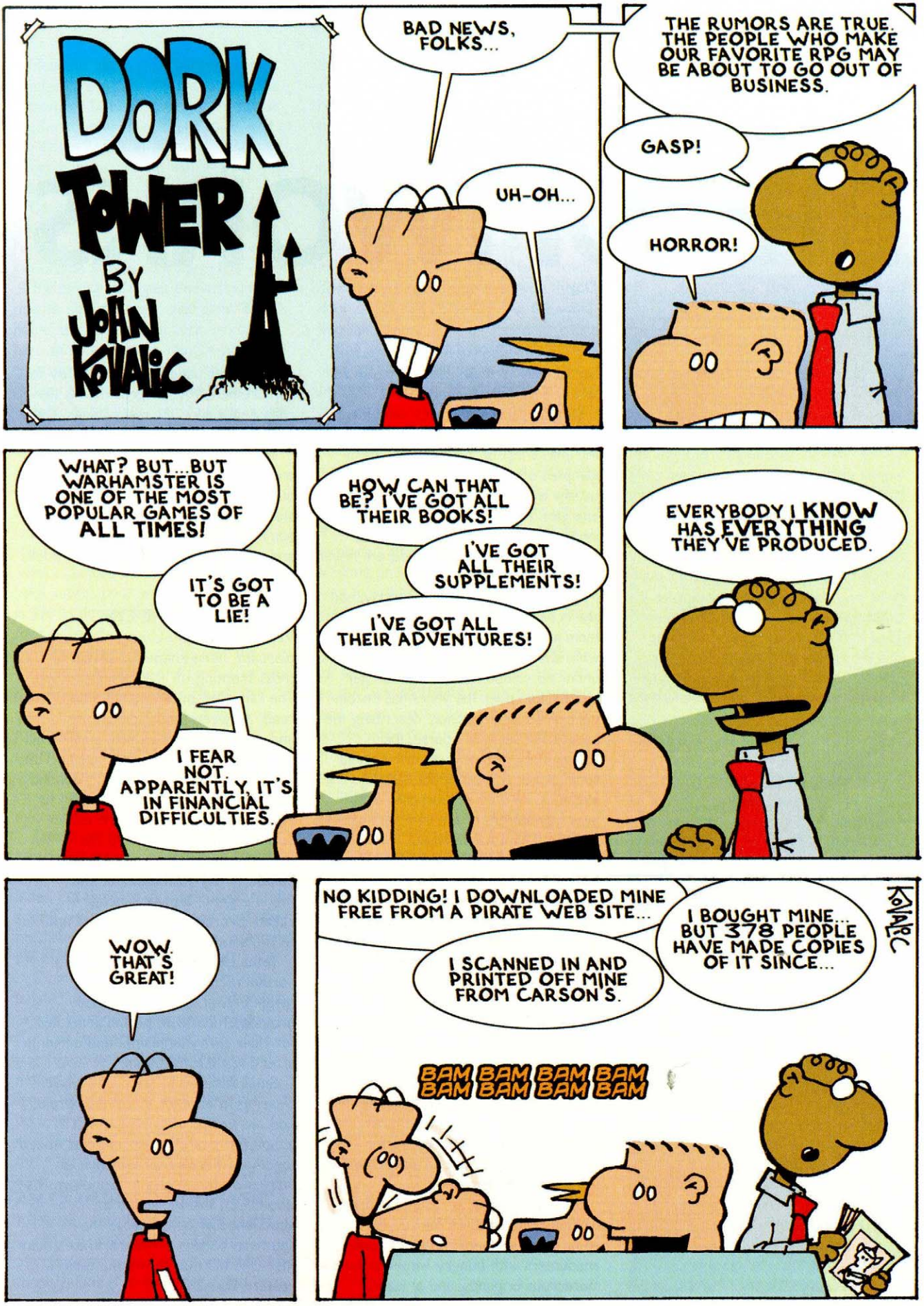
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By JOHN KOVALIC
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GASP!
HORROR!
WHAT? BUT...BUT WARHAMSTER IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR GAMES OF ALL TIMES!
IT'S GOT TO BE A LIE!
I FEAR NOT. APPARENTLY, IT'S IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.
HOW CAN THAT BE? I'VE GOT ALL THEIR BOOKS!
I'VE GOT ALL THEIR SUPPLEMENTS!
I'VE GOT ALL THEIR ADVENTURES!
EVERYBODY I KNOW HAS EVERYTHING THEY'VE PRODUCED.
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I SCANNED IN AND PRINTED OFF MINE FROM CARSON'S.
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TATHA'S BROOMWORKS

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

Many farms lie on both sides of the Skuldāsk Road running west out of Elturel. They nestle between the countless gentle hills of the rolling, unfenced countryside. Light woods cloak the heights and swampy backwaters of the area, and all else is tilled or grazed—save only very few leaf farms, newly invented hybrids between conservation and commerce.

One of these is Aloum Lyndren, the home and livelihood of Tatha Beruel. It's called a leaf farm because Tatha rears trees that are planted and tended for specific purposes, a relatively recent practice encouraged by some elves to keep human depredations of the forest to a minimum.

Aloum Lyndren is named for the elf who helped Tatha found the farm around a small natural spring. Aloum Lyndren was a sun elf whose kin dwelt among humans along the Sword Coast for several centuries. All of them, Aloum included, have gone to Evermeet, the elven refuge to the west.

Tatha's farm lies on the north side of the Skuldask Road running west out of Elturel, close enough to that city to just be able to see its walls from atop the farm's easternmost hill. Tatha's farm is a destination for many folk not much interested in the brooms she makes or the herbs and wooden spars she sells.

They come for what Tatha calls "her gift from Mystra." Tatha has the ability to see scenes of past uses of a magic item. This ability operates fitfully, sometimes failing altogether and sometimes operating very strongly (though almost always briefly), and it involves Tatha touching the item to be examined and then falling into a brief trance. The curious, the desperate, and the wise come from all corners of Faerûn seeking Tatha's gift, and they pay handsomely to make use of it (from 20 to 2,000 gp per attempt).

During trances, she sees vivid mental images of events involving the use of the item. Most of these images are glimpses of a single instant, but some, usually events involving great magical energies, reveal a short scene lasting no longer than a few seconds. Sounds, smells, and physical sensations are never conferred by Tatha's ability.

Tatha slips out of trance quickly, and she is never disoriented or prevented from immediate action. She remembers what she's seen perfectly, although she's under no compulsion to describe her visions, and over the years has become quite skilled at accurately describing the images she sees. Of course, the fragmentary images quite often reveal some of the powers of the item; the identities, natures, or purposes of previous owners of the item; and uses to which the item has been put.

Tatha Beruel is a chaotic good female half-elf. She has long, lustrous black hair (usually worn bound up with leather in a "mare's tail"), golden-hued skin, delicate features, and large green eyes. She's slender with shoulders and arms corded with muscle and scarred from cuts suffered in farm work. Few things frighten her, and she dislikes individuals who try to coerce or scare her or anyone else to do anything.

Although it's unclear how closely Mystra watches over her, Tatha seems to regard herself as immune to all threats and harm, denying sinister wizards, raiding orcs, and slavers with the same calm demeanor.

She dwells alone at Aloum Lyndren, having survived there for 20 years apparently unscathed despite known encounters with hungry winter wolves, murderous brigands, and at least a dozen slaver bands sent specifically to capture her. "Mystra provides" is her calm explanation for many things, her own survival among them.

Tending farm plants and trees, the ongoing process of making brooms in bulk, and feeding herself keeps Tatha steadily—and apparently, contentedly—busy. She is known to enjoy reading and dancing, and she often buys books from peddlers.

WHAT MEETS THE EYE

Visitors to Aloum Lyndren first see a pleasant, horn-shaped expanse of trees fronting on the Skuldask Road. The farm lies on the north side of the road, between (and including) two hills, and encompassing a third, smaller hill well to the north, about 2 miles off the road. This small forest is surrounded by rolling grazing land belonging to other farmers (the half-orc cattle-breeder Ohlongh Vrurr to the west; the mixed stock farm of the Trindle human family to the north, and the energetic, human rancher Elmair Broruk to both the east and to the south).

Tatha Beruel apparently enjoys cordial relations with all of her neighbors, and she occasionally provides them with herbal remedies for their own complaints and ailments affecting their livestock.

Small trails wind from one small clearing to another in Tatha's forest, and alert observers notice that although trees of all sorts grow mixed together, there's a prevalence of maples on the slopes of Sundown Rise (the hill on the west) and an abundance of oaks across the southern border of the farm to Vixen Rise (the hill that forms the farm's eastern flank).

Heading north through the farm, blueleaf trees take over as far as the summit of Dark Rise (the third hill on the farm), and from there to its end at the Graw Rocks in the northeast, hazel, hornbeam, and ash trees are the most numerous.

Casual observers traveling on the Skuldask Road could easily mistake the farm for a remnant of a larger forest left behind after woodcutters had felled all the best and biggest timber, home now to nothing larger than deer. Tatha's home and main broom barn are both hard to spot, because they're stone structures sunk so greatly into the ground that their sod roofs (both planted with herb gardens) seem to be no more than tiny hillocks.

Tatha's home has a main room and two sleeping chambers, one of them largely used for storage (housing the products of Tatha's whittling, a large loom, and general household oddments). Most of her broom making is done outside, before the doors of her broom-barn, unless poor weather drives her inside its doors. She keeps her shavings for kindling.

The buildings occupy two of the smaller clearings on the farm. Cutting has created three larger clearings spaced about the forest. Tatha owns two draft horses (boarded at a neighboring farm) that she uses to pull out stumps and the largest tree trunks. However, she prefers to cut and carry everything herself.

Tatha's preferred method of harvesting trees is to climb the largest ones if need be to trim branches, fell the trees, cut them on-site, split them on the spot if she's making firewood, and take finished cuts back to her barn, collecting the bark and shavings last of all.

On most days, visitors can readily locate Tatha by either the sound of her axe or by spotting her sitting out in front of her barn at work on brooms. Her house is the stone-walled garden mound that has the bell and sign out front and the pair of outhouses out back, whereas the barn sports a chopping-block, two sawhorses, and three large, rustic wooden chairs.

AN EXAMINATION OF MAGIC

A recent example of how Tatha's gift works is provided by a caravan merchant from Scornubel, who on a run through Elturel to the coast called in at the Broomworks and asked Tatha to examine a wand he'd found in a cottage he'd seized in lieu of debts after its owner died. The merchant suspected he had a wand, at least, because it was a rare polished, foot-long stick of tapering bone that was stored in its own box, wrapped in moldering silk. Tatha charged him 100 gp (if he'd been a kinder, more polite, or poorer man, her fee might have been as low as 50 gp), laid herself down on a patch of moss outside the door of her house, and he put the wand into her hands.

She saw a dark cave, lit by lantern-light, and the eager faces of men with picks and shovels, moving purposefully to a spot on one stone cavern wall with the wand held in front of them. That vision faded into darkness, and next she saw the furious face of a dwarf in armor, glaring at her as his greataxe whirled back behind his shoulder—and then came cleaving down. The vision exploded into brightness that left her blinking and shuddering . . . and gave way to a third vision: the item being placed onto a heap of treasure at the feet of a dead dwarf laid out in splendor, with grim dwarves standing all around. That vision in turn gave way to the last: torchlight in the same tomb, and eager human faces crowding close as someone reached down into the thick dust all over the same treasure-heap and grasped the item.

In all of the visions, the item looked like an ornately worked (smooth, but chased and riddled with sculpted holes), rod of shining silver with a flared end.

When Tatha emerged from her trance, she asked the merchant what the bone stick had looked like while in her grasp. He confirmed that it flickered momentarily into a semblance of a "rod of fine silver" on several occasions. Tatha then told him that it was her guess that he was the owner of a *rod of metal and mineral detection* that resembled a wand when inactive. This guess later proved to be correct, but it was a rare instance—usually Tatha doesn't venture opinions, but limits herself to careful and extensive descriptions of her visions.

ELMINSTER'S NOTES:

Tatha regards her gift from Mystra as a sacred trust, not to be misused—and has said as much, several times, to visitors who desired to hire her services for themselves alone, or offered her coin to mislead other individuals as to the nature and powers of a particular magic item.

However, I know that she does mislead clients from time to time—either by saying she can't learn anything about an item, and therefore only owe her the minimum 20 gp fee, or by understating or omitting powers she's discerned. She does this when she judges that owners of items she examines will misuse them based on the information she gives. Usually, she fears they'll be emboldened into tyranny and wanton destruction.

Tatha told me that she doesn't view this as slighting Mystra, because those who misuse magic in such ways destroy the lives and freedoms of others who would otherwise be free to use magic themselves, and thereby also increase the general fear and oppression of wizards and sorcerers. Further, she informed me that Mystra hath personally and directly assured her that she is correct in this view—and her description of the manifestation of the goddess leads me to the inescapable conclusion that Mystra did indeed appear to her.

Additional evidence of the Mother of Magic's personal interest in Tatha is this: On several occasions, unscrupulous merchants and slavers have attempted to take advantage of Tatha's trances to confine her and transport her elsewhere.

In all such instances, she has been teleported back to her farm unscathed, and those who made such attempts against her were affected as if by a *feeblemind* spell, their feebleness of wits lasting for two tendays or more. Tatha herself has no trained skill at magic, and no means of causing such effects.

TATHA'S BROOMWORKS

TREASURE?

1. Two outhouses stand side by side here—one of them in use, and one obviously in ruins. Cleverly placed stones allow easy climbing down into its privy-pit, where hefting aside a stone in the side of the pit wall closest to the aromatic active privy allows access to a large earthen pot set into the earth. Inside, Tatha keeps her amassed wealth. It takes a Search check (DC 30) to find the hidden wealth.

HIDDEN WEAPONS

2. In a hollow tree near a small swamp at the edge of the farm, Tatha keeps larger, bulkier valuables—including, according to rumor, several magic weapons left by visitors who feared the visions she reported to them. It takes a Search check (DC 25) to find this cache.

BOLT HOLE

3. The stone foundations of a very old structure—probably human-built—are located here, overgrown by the forest. If Tatha needs to hide (or hide a visitor), two readily moveable stones offer access to an underground, stone-lined cellar equipped with cots and basic provisions. The hidden cellar can be found with a DC 20 Search check.

TOOL ROOM

4. Tatha keeps her most valuable tools (her best axes, stump-chain and spikes, mallet and wedges, and her favorite splitting maul) hidden in stone-lined storage pits hidden under old tree stumps. The storage pits can be found by DC 20 Search checks.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

REVENGE
in the back alleys of the
FORGOTTEN REALMS

by Paul Kemp · illustrated by Chris Appel

"DON'T DO IT, RASTEN," SOLOMON PLEADED.

The desperation in the old priest's voice stopped Rasten cold. He froze uncertainly in the doorway of the decrepit temple, doubt suddenly and unexpectedly finding a foothold in his previously unassailable resolve. The moment, however, lasted only as long as Rasten's next breath. When he inhaled, the coolness of the autumn air set off a bout of agony in the wreckage of his mouth. His pained exhalation bore his doubt off into the night.

"You don't have to do it."

Rasten bit back a snarl. He did have to do it. By the Hells, he *wanted* to do it. He had made his choice last night when he had sworn himself to Hoar the Thunderer. Vax Gellen would pay, and he would pay tonight.

Unwilling to face Solomon with rage on his face, Rasten kept his back to his mentor and silently stared out onto the urban wasteland they called home. In Selûne's dim moonlight, the disintegrating buildings and heaps of stone rubble looked like the scattered tombstones of a long-forgotten cemetery. His city was a graveyard.

And here come the walking dead, he thought.

Here and there, feeble fires flickered to life amid the ruins. Furtive figures scurried out of the rubble and huddled around the flames like flies around a corpse. They reminded Rasten of a child's stick-figure drawings—thin and unfinished. Standing around the wan flames wrapped in dirty rags, they tried to warm their worn bodies, or perhaps cooked some treasured scrap of food they had been able to scrounge during the day. They were "innies," the forgotten mass of human dregs that peopled Inner Phlan.

The six square miles of ruins that the innies called home—Inner Phlan—sat in the center of New Phlan like a rotten pit in a ripe peach. But unlike a peach, in Phlan a fifteen-foot-tall stone wall separated the rotten from the merely ripe. Only criminals, the insane, or mercy workers like Solomon chose to call Inner Phlan home. For the poor or half-breeds like Rasten, choice had nothing to do with it.

He ran a coarse-skinned hand through his lank black hair and gently massaged the sore lumps on his skull.

But we're all survivors, by Hells, he thought. *Every one of us.*

He took a fierce pride in that. He had prowled these streets since boyhood, endured everything they threw at him, and come through it all the stronger.

"Please Rasten, turn around. Look at me." Solomon's fatherly tone pulled Rasten around.

Though it had not been the elderly priest's purpose, seeing Solomon's battered face only intensified Rasten's rage. A patchwork of bruises and pink gashes blanketed Solomon's bald head. A swollen lump the size and color of a small plum prevented him from opening his right eye. His narrow face was a wasteland of cuts, bumps, and bruises.

Solomon tried, but could not quite stifle a wince of pain with every movement.

Still, Rasten was pleased to see that the old man retained his dignity. The beating had taken nothing from Solomon but a tithe of blood and pain. Everything important remained intact. Solomon's tall body remained unbowed. His blue robe hung from his bony shoulders like the cape of a monarch. An iron holy symbol of Ilmater the Suffering Lord—a pair of cupped hands, healing hands—dangled from a leather thong around his neck.

Solomon spoke slowly. "You don't have to do it." His single usable eye implored Rasten to forgive.

Rasten swallowed the angry reply that rushed to his lips. He could not forgive. Not anymore. Surely Solomon must know that? Last night, Rasten had dedicated himself to Hoar the Thunderer, and the God of Vengeance had answered his prayers with the peal of two thunderclaps. In that instant, forgiveness had been skimmed off the top of his soul like dross from a vat of molten metal. He felt only rage now, righteous wrath. He was the instrument of his god, and Gellen would pay.

Rasten caressed his makeshift holy symbol like a lover's skin. The simple wooden disk hung from a leather strap around his neck. He had scratched the sign of Hoar onto its surface with a rusty dagger—two jagged lightning bolts—cause and effect; action and reaction; deed and vengeance. The symbol served as his talisman, his assurance that what he planned to do was right, despite Solomon's disapproval.

With his left hand, Rasten reached down and felt the heft of the small cloth pouch that hung from his leather belt; felt the weight of the meaty object within. It too served as a talisman. It too assured him that he was right. He let out a low snarl.

Wincing, Solomon limped across the dirt floor and gently placed his hands on Rasten's shoulders. The priest of Ilmater was beanpole thin and stood a full head taller than Rasten.

"Please Rasten—don't. For me. Remember what Ilmater teaches? What I've taught you? We must forgive. We must endure. Even . . ." Solomon's gaze flitted to Rasten's mouth. "Even that." When Rasten did not reply, Solomon sighed and nodded his head at the wooden disc of Hoar. "I know you won't answer me because . . . of your pain, and because you have taken The Oath. But listen to me." He gripped Rasten's shoulders tightly. "Please Rasten, listen. Vengeance is empty."

Rasten frowned slightly but held his ground. He could no longer be moved by words, not even Solomon's words. After Hoar's thunderclaps had answered his prayers, he had raised his battered face to the sky and sworn The Oath—sworn that he would speak no words until vengeance was done or he was dead. That the beating had coincidentally robbed him of speech only served as confirmation that he was the chosen of The Thunderer.

With a slight grunt, he pulled free of Solomon's gentle grip. The grieved old priest looked as though he had been slapped. Rasten managed to keep his face expressionless. He did not like hurting Solomon, but he could not afford to be soft. Not tonight. He loved the old man, but this time Solomon was wrong.

Rasten put his hand over the wooden disc at his neck. Gellen would pay.

Without another glance at the man who had raised an orc half-breed as his own, Rasten turned on his heel and stalked out into the darkness.

He stopped after walking only a few blocks and stared up into the night sky.

This was the right thing to do wasn't it?

Selûne held no answers; but the pouch at his belt did.

This was not only the right thing to do; it was the only thing to do.

A roll of thunder boomed in the distance—once; twice. The cloudless sky offered no explanation, but Rasten knew that he had Hoar's approval.

He began walking again, his stride more confident now. Despite the darkness, Rasten carried no torch. The orc blood flowing in his veins granted him superb nightvision. He saw by the dim starlight of night almost as clearly as he saw by the light of the noon sun.

He strode through the narrow, rubble-strewn streets of Inner Phlan with the ease of a man long familiar with their every twist. Burned out, partially collapsed brick buildings loomed out of the darkness on every side like monolithic tombstones, the bones of a city long dead. Most stood abandoned except for the rats, but some of the sturdier ones served as homes for the poor. Rasten could tell which was which because planks of wood blocked the windows of the occupied buildings, to keep out the chill.

He walked purposefully down the center of the cluttered street. Had he been farther out into Inner Phlan, such a lack of caution would have been risky, but this close to Solomon's temple he had nothing to fear. The underfed men and women who crowded around the scattered braziers here were harmless human ghosts. The temple and its immediate environs served as a kind of safe zone that acted as a magnet for the weak. The people who lived in the shadow of the temple were not the predators of Inner Phlan; they were the prey.

Soon however, he left the safety of the temple area and emerged into the hunting grounds. No physical border marked the boundary between the two areas, the safe and the dangerous, but Rasten could sense when he crossed it. He was in the game now. Hunter and hunted.

Here he kept to one side of the street. Running from building to building and hugging the walls, he flitted in and out of the shadows with a grace surprising for a man of his size.

The lightless avenue looked deserted, but he knew better than to make that assumption. He was not the only inhabitant of Inner Phlan with

HE FELT ONLY RAGE NOW, RIGHTEOUS WRATH. HE WAS THE INSTRUMENT OF HIS GOD.

nightvision. The city had been conquered and re-conquered so many times that Hoar only knew what kinds of creatures crept through the ruins. Bands of marauders prowled these streets, looking for the weak or the solitary.

A skittering from up the street froze him. He did not see anything. Moving slowly, he slid into the pitch darkness of an alley and scanned the street while pulling his rusty dagger from his belt. His breath came steady and even. He was unafraid.

With his nightvision, he saw a small creature lope across the street forty feet ahead of him. Three more followed it.

Dogs, he smiled. Just dogs. He slid his blade back into its leather home.

It turned out that the street was deserted. That would have been unusual three months ago, but not anymore. Gellen and his Blackcowls claimed this territory. They swept the streets regularly, beating or killing everyone in their path. No one dared get caught here, at least if they could help it.

Can't always be helped, though, Rasten grimly reminded himself. As he walked, the cloth pouch bounced against his thigh like a club.

A chaotic memory of hammering fists and a glittering knife swam in his mind. He remembered few details. Blackcowls had caught him and Solomon wandering the streets after dark. Solomon had insisted that they leave the temple area to look for a man named Garth, a member of the flock who had been missing for two days. They had not found him. They had found eight Blackcowls, and been beaten senseless. In truth, they had gotten off lucky. Most times, Blackcowls left no survivors. But they had felt pity for Solomon—or contempt—and had left the priest of the God of Suffering with his life and his pain. As for Rasten . . .

He ran a stubby fingered hand over his face, felt the slashes and bruises that marred his visage. His mouth ached like Hells, but he took the pain.

Tonight was to be payback.

The clear sky again rumbled its approval—two rolling peals of thunder like the sound of distant drums. In counterpoint to the thunder, however, Solomon's solemn pronouncement still echoed in Rasten's head. *Vengeance is empty.*

His path carried him westward, toward Newburg, the "civilized" area of Inner Phlan—a block of brothels, filthy taverns, drug dens, and flophouses where Gellen made his headquarters. Rumored to have been forced out of New Phlan by a power struggle within one of Phlan's thieves' guilds, Gellen had reestablished himself in Inner Phlan. He surrounded himself with a band of armed thugs—Blackcowls; called such by the innies for the hooded black cloaks they wore.

Only three blocks from Newburg, Rasten came upon the body of Garth. The birds had been at it some, but he was sure of the identity of the corpse, even in the dark. The body hung suspended from a rope strung over the corner of a building. Shirtless and skinny, Garth's body swayed in the night breeze like a macabre scarecrow. Even from the street Rasten could see the characters carved into the corpse's chest.

Rasten stiffened with anger. The Oath prevented him from screaming his rage to the heavens, so he held his powerful arms aloft and shook his fists in silent wrath. Vented, he scanned the street to either side. Confident that it was empty, he stalked forward and scaled the side of the crumbling building. Gently, he lowered Garth's body to the street.

Garth had been beaten. Badly. His face was so swollen and covered in bloody bruises that he was nearly unrecognizable. Dried blood caked his lips. Rasten did not need to open his mouth to know that his tongue had been cut out.

Tears welled in his eyes. Rage flowed out of him like water through a sieve, leaving behind only sympathy for Garth. Rasten knew firsthand the pain Garth had endured. He stared with blurry eyes at the words carved into the skin of Garth's chest.

"No Talking," they read, in Common. Gellen's calling card. That, and the severed tongue.

A roll of thunder growled in the distance, low and dangerous.

The guildmaster of Inner Phlan's thieves sought to limit loose tongues by executing the occasional "stoolie." Rasten, however, knew that there weren't any real stoolies. The innies concerned themselves with getting their next meal and finding warmth for the night, not the underworld politics of Phlan. No, Gellen did not execute stoolies; he executed innocent men and women at random, seeking to prevent any loose talk before it ever began.

IN TRUTH, THEY HAD GOTTEN OFF LUCKY. MOST TIMES, BLACKCOWLS LEFT NO SURVIVORS.

No Talking. Even for the illiterate innies, the message was clear—cross Gellen and get strung up for the crows.

Rasten wiped away his tears and carried Garth into a nearby building. Rats scattered as he entered, but he hardly noticed. Using his dagger to loosen the soil, he scraped a shallow hole in the dirt floor and placed Garth within. Then he raised a cairn made from stone rubble. That was the best he could do. Another approving peal of thunder greeted him as he emerged onto the street.

In the distance, he saw the soft orange glow of torches and fires—Newburg.

He approached cautiously. Criminals on the lam made up the bulk of the men in Newburg, hence the relative wealth of the area. He had to be careful.

Single story, ramshackle wooden buildings lined both sides of the street like a haphazard row of children's blocks. The tottering buildings leaned against one another for support as though drunk, so close together that they looked connected. A stream of shouts, laughter, and human traffic moved in and out of the building nearest Rasten.

The local tavern, he assumed, serving rat stew and gut-eating

swill made from fermented potatoes.

A few buildings down from the inn, three underfed women in dirty smocks leaned against the porch rail of a dark, windowless house. They tried hard to look alluring but only managed to look haggard. Nevertheless, it was clear to Rasten that the place was a brothel, or at least Newburg's equivalent thereof.

A few sputtering torches placed in makeshift sconces on the outside of the buildings provided a dim, flickering luminescence. The dying embers of several fires glowed orange in shallow pits dug in the street. Small crowds of disheveled men huddled around the flames passing dirty bottles of homemade spirits. Drunks and mistheads lay sprawled incoherent or unconscious amid the scattered heaps of garbage and pools of sewage. Dangerous looking men and orcs stalked the street, sometimes stepping over the drunks, sometimes stepping on them.

Rasten did not dare the light. If he ran into a Blackcowl, he might be recognized. He stayed hidden in the shadows, his grim, alert eyes taking in everything. Mostly he focused on the tavern, waiting for an opportunity.

Within an hour, two Blackcowls staggered out. One of them tripped over a drunk lying in the doorway and stumbled with a slurred curse. He grabbed at his companion as he fell, and both tumbled to the ground in a heap, cursing and shouting. Rasten could not make out their words, but he could hear the angry tone of their voices. They staggered to their feet. The drunk mumbled something apologetic. Unsatisfied, the Blackcowls proceeded to beat him, raining kicks into his head and ribs. The prone man covered his face with his hands and curled up into a ball, crying in pain. The Blackcowls laughed and laughed.

Rasten's eyes narrowed; his lips jerked back from his fangs in a soft hiss of rage. Something Solomon had said to him years ago echoed in his brain—*only weak men take advantage of the helpless.*

His ham fists clenched in frustration. These Blackcowls were weak, and he would show them that tonight. But not now. Though it pained him, he dared not reveal himself by helping the drunk.

Gellen's men shot a few more halfhearted kicks into the drunk's ribs before leaving off. Still laughing, one of them grabbed a torch from a building, and they stumbled down a nearby alley.

HIS HAM FISTS CLENCHED IN FRUSTRATION. THESE BLACKCOWLS WERE WEAK.

Rasten slipped out of the shadows and followed. The drunk moaned pitifully as he passed.

Rasten stopped, torn. The man probably had broken ribs. He might die without attention. Rasten looked indecisively down the alley, then down at the drunk. Sympathy for the man's suffering warred with his desire to make Gellen and his Blackcowls pay. Hesitantly, he stepped toward the beaten man. As he did so, his hand brushed against the pouch at his belt. That stopped him in mid-stride. He turned and hurried after Gellen's men. A pained moan from the drunk chased him into the alley like a specter.

The narrow alley branched frequently—the place was a maze—but Rasten had no trouble locating the Blackcowls. They thumped along noisily—laughing, tripping over garbage, shoving one another—confident that the cloaks they wore brought them safety. Soon, Rasten had their torchlight in view.

He followed, needing them to lead him to Gellen's lair.

The sky rumbled ominously, as though impatient.

Soon the Blackcowls reached their destination. The sturdy, two-story wooden building had to be Gellen's headquarters. Two Blackcowls stood guard at the reinforced door while two more—probably armed with crossbows—watched from the roof. Rasten observed from a distance, careful not to be seen.

The guards jawed good-naturedly with the two drunks as they stumbled up to the door. The men answered them with some obscenities of their own and jerked the door open. Rasten caught only a glimpse of a dimly lit hallway before the door slammed shut behind them. He watched and waited.

The next few hours passed slowly. Three times Blackcowls exited the building, but always in pairs or groups. He needed a solitary man. A storm blew in while he waited. The cloudbank streaked in from the south with unnatural speed, erasing the twinkling stars and leaving the sky as blank as a gray slate. He grew more restless as thunder rolled across the sky. It began to rain. Soon it became a downpour.

A double boom of thunder like an explosion rocked the rickety buildings nearby. At that instant, the door to the headquarters flew open and a single Blackcowl emerged. He exchanged some words with the guards and walked away, bent against the rain, hood pulled tight about his head. He did not carry a torch.

Rasten smiled mirthlessly and followed.

The Blackcowl knew the streets well. Despite the darkness, he navigated the maze of alleys with ease. Still, Rasten gradually closed in on him.

A round of lightning tore through the night sky, bathing the alley in repeating flashes of brilliance. Rasten hit the dirt, but the Blackcowl did not turn. He did stop, though. Rasten stayed motionless in the mud, staring down the alley. The Blackcowl glanced back and forth but did not see Rasten. Apparently satisfied that he was alone, Gellen's man found a corner and began fumbling at his breeches.

Rasten could not believe it. This idiot was going to urinate. Here! Now! Determined to seize the opportunity, Rasten rose quickly to his feet, flattened himself against the wall, and stalked down the alley. The rain drowned out all sounds of his approach. In seconds, he crouched hidden in the

darkness ten feet from the unsuspecting and helpless Blackcowl.

Only weak men take advantage of the help–

Boom! Thunder roared out of the sky, drowning out Solomon's voice in his head. The startled Blackcowl involuntarily cowered at the booming roar.

Rasten leaped out, grabbed him around the back of the head, and drove his face into the side of the building. The Blackcowl's nose crumpled like eggshell; a stream of red joined the muddy pools of rain.

"Unngnh," the man mouthed. While he was still stunned, Rasten jerked him around and smashed a fist into his face. The Blackcowl went limp. Rasten took out his dagger and knelt beside him.

Only weak men . . . Only weak men . . . Solomon's words were a drumbeat.

He pulled the hooded cloak off the Blackcowl and stuffed it under his shirt. A lightning flash illuminated the alley. The man looked young. But young or not, he had chosen to work for Gellen. And Gellen had done–

Rasten snarled, his knuckles white on the dagger hilt. Gellen had done what Gellen had done. And now it was time for Rasten to do what he must. He pressed the dagger against the unconscious man's throat. Solomon's voice pled with him, but he ignored it. He answered only to his anger.

Two peals of thunder boomed approval.

He rose unsteadily and headed back to Gellen's headquarters.

Strange . . . He had thought that he would feel elated after taking out one of Gellen's men. Or at least satisfaction. Instead, he felt . . . nothing.

Vengeance is empty.

He dismissed Solomon and continued on.

About halfway to Gellen's headquarters, he stopped and donned the hooded cloak of the dead Blackcowl.

The thunderstorm raged like a child throwing a tantrum. The wind drove the rain into blistering horizontal sheets. Rasten stumbled toward the building, careful to fall face down in plain sight of the guards. Rising slowly–first to his knees, then uncertainly to his wobbly feet–he walked toward the door.

"Gotta little wet there, huh pal?" One of the guards shouted above the thunder and wind. The other guard laughed. Thunder pealed. "Is that Delin?" He moved forward to get a better look.

Rasten feigned a stumble and clumsily waved the guard away, adding a grunt for good measure. "Drunk," he heard the other guard say. "Leave him be."

"Yup," said the other, and backed off. Rasten pulled the door open and entered Gellen's lair.

The hallway was lit with torches along the wall, although the wind and wet had blown out those nearest the door. He tightened the cowl to keep his face covered. Murmured voices carried down the hallway from a room nearby. He moved toward them, lurching back and forth like a drunk.

He entered a square room. A wood-burning stove provided warmth. Two men sat in their shirtsleeves at a small table throwing dice. One was bald but wore a large mustache that clung to his lip like a bedraggled mouse. The other was fat and blonde with beady green

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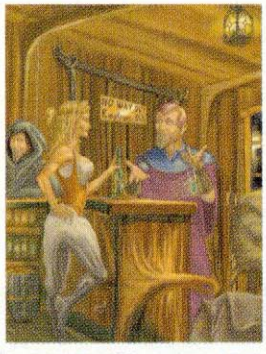

The Complete Guide to Doppelgangers. Available in November from Goodman Games.

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eyes. Both wore a longsword and dagger. Their dripping cloaks and cowls hung from pegs near the stove. Both focused on the throw of the dice like their lives depended on it.

"I'll go tell Gellen," a voice suddenly stated from his right. Turning eagerly—but not too eagerly, he hoped—Rasten surreptitiously eyed the speaker from the shadows of his cowl. The rain had plastered the man's thinning black hair to his scalp. Dressed in leather armor and armed with a shortsword, the man jogged up the stairs with only a passing glance at Rasten. He started to follow—

"Helluva storm, eh?"

Rasten froze. The mustache was speaking to him. As though making the man's point, thunder suddenly shook the baseboards. The mustachioed man grinned at him while shaking the pips off the dice. "Helluva storm and that's a fact. Don't believe I've seen none like it before." He threw the dice to the table. "Whoomah!" he shouted.

"Hah!" exclaimed the fat man. "That's three you owe, Div."

"Three! Two you mean."

"Wait a minute, you hairy . . ."

Rasten ascended the stairs while they argued. Thunder boomed.

A hallway stretched to his left and right, lined with doors. Some stood open or partially ajar, but most were closed. The thin man was nowhere in sight.

Voices carried from the open room at the end of the hallway to his right. He took three steps in that direction, then heard a door pulled open behind him. A voice filled the hall—the voice of the thin man from the stairs! Another voice from within the room responded. Thinking quickly, Rasten slouched to the ground against the wall, leaned forward, and held his head between his knees. As he did so, he tried to sneak a look down the hallway. When he pushed aside the wet cowl clinging to his face, he saw the thin man standing halfway out of the third room left of the stairs, talking to someone within. The man nodded.

"All right, then," he said, and pulled the door shut.

Rasten jerked his eyes to the floor and began making retching sounds. The man's bootsteps thumped toward him. Rasten's heart gonged in his ears, but he kept his face to the floor. The man stopped before him, his boots only feet away. Rasten closed his eyes and feigned even louder retches.

The man started to walk away but stopped again, obviously uncertain. Rasten's mind raced.

Inspired, he leaned further forward and hung his face over the man's boots. He feigned a retching fit of extraordinary vigor.

"Watch it there," ordered the thin man, dancing backward to avoid the expected vomit. "Watch it there, boy," he said again. The man chuckled as he walked past Rasten. "You'll feel that one tomorrow and that's sure." His footsteps continued down the hall, toward the open room. A hail of voices greeted him as he entered.

A double ring of thunder pealed out of the sky.

Rasten jumped to his feet and hurried down the hallway toward the door the thin man had exited. His purposeful stride looked nothing like the sloppy meandering of a drunk; the time for pretense was past.

His hand shook as he extended it to grip the doorhandle. Flexing his fingers, he tried to steady himself. Ready, he grabbed the handle, pulled the door open, rushed in, and slammed it shut behind him.

"Here now," said a man's voice. Rasten whipped around to see Vax Gellen seated calmly at a table set with a meal of bread and cheese. A single candle provided light. He held a ceramic tankard halfway between the table and his thin lips. Otherwise, the room was bare but for a shuttered window.

"Here now," he said again, and placed the tankard down on the wooden table with a smack. "I said no disruptions." The beginnings of anger colored his tone.

Gellen looked to be in his early thirties. He wore his long black hair pulled back in a ponytail. His narrow face, with its large twitchy nose and scraggly black whiskers, reminded Rasten of a rat. A longsword hung from a scabbard at his belt, while a sweat-stained leather jerkin hung from his shoulders.

Hard-soled boots stomped into the floor as Gellen jumped to his feet. "I said—Blast it!" In his haste, Gellen bumped his knee on the table and spilled his tankard. He daubed at his pants for a minute, then stared menacingly at Rasten.

"Blast it, boy! There better be a good reason for this, or I'll have yer balls in a vise."

Rasten pulled back the cowl.

Gellen froze. His eyes flashed in surprise and his face went white. "Wha—? Who—? You're not one of mine," he finally managed.

Oh yes I am, Rasten thought, but could not say. Instead, he stared hate into the man who beat the weak.

Gellen jumped to his feet, drew his longsword, and rushed Rasten. Instead of backing off or dodging, Rasten did the unexpected—he lowered his head and met the guildmaster's charge with one of his own. His shoulder slammed into Gellen's chest before the surprised guildmaster could bring his longsword to bear. Ribs cracked, and Gellen squealed. Rasten grabbed him by the forearm, twisted the longsword loose, and shoved him backward.

"Who sent you?" Gellen asked breathlessly, hunched over and cradling his ribs. "Mergen, from New Phlan?" His words came rapidly, like the panicked chirps of a bird trapped in its cage by a hungry cat. "I'll pay you twice what he offered. Twice. I've got the coin. Say something, Blast you!"

Rasten kicked aside the longsword and stalked toward him. The wide-eyed guildmaster backed up so fast that he slammed into the wall. Sweat beaded his brow and his breath came fast.

Rasten pulled off the cloak as he advanced. Staring into Gellen's eyes, he ripped off his tunic to reveal his bare chest.

The pink scars on Rasten's barrel chest had healed some, but they remained sharp enough to make them out clearly—"No Talking," they read.

Gellen's eyes grew wide as coins. He started to stutter something but clamped his mouth shut when he looked into Rasten's eyes.

Rasten pulled his dagger. Gellen backed into the wall as far as the wood would allow. He seemed to consider trying to escape by the window, but he

realized quickly that it would take too much time. Instead, he drew a dagger from a secret sheathe in the small of his back and shouted for help.

The instant he opened his mouth, a roar of thunder shook the building and drowned out his voice. Gellen's look of shock was priceless. His gaze darted frantically around the room, looking for escape. Rasten bared his fangs in a predatory smile, and Gellen's expression grew panicked.

Gellen shouted again, and again Hoar drowned his fearful cries with a roll of booming thunder. Gellen's hands shook so badly that the dagger fairly danced a jig in his grasp.

When Rasten closed, Gellen made a desperate lunge with his blade. Rasten used his dagger to parry Gellen's out wide, then grabbed the guildmaster's hand by the wrist with his other hand. Rage fed the squeeze. Bones cracked, and Gellen's dagger clattered to the ground.

"Ahhh!" screamed the chief thief. He looked as though he might faint. Rasten released the wrist and punched Gellen in the face. Blood exploded out from his nose and lips. He staggered backward and collapsed against the wall with a moan.

Confident that no one had heard the scuffle, Rasten strode to the door and latched it. He wanted no interruptions.

Outside, the thunderstorm raged.

Rasten gagged and bound the semi-conscious guildmaster with strips of cloth torn from Gellen's own cloak. Seating him in one of the chairs, Rasten slapped him back to coherence. Eyes wide with fear, Gellen struggled feebly against his bonds. The cloth did not give an inch. He began blathering, the terrified utterances incomprehensible through the cloth gag.

Rasten held a finger up to his mouth to indicate silence. Then, baring his fangs in a sinister smile, he jabbed his thumb at his chest—No Talking.

Gellen shut up. His pale face twitched uncontrollably and his eyes watered like squeezed oranges.

Rasten waved his dagger meaningfully in front of Gellen's face. The guildmaster shook with sobs.

Weak. Gellen sat helpless before him and whimpered like a child.

Only weak men take advantage of the helpless.

Rasten cocked his head, surprised. Where had that come from?

Thunder rolled, shaking the building to its foundation. Rasten dismissed Solomon's words with a wave of the dagger. Now was not the time for doubt. He reached for the cloth pouch at his belt. He delicately pulled open the drawstring, like a jeweler unveiling a diamond, then dumped the contents onto Gellen's lap.

A pink piece of meat, jaggedly cut on one end, flopped onto the guildmaster's thighs. Gellen instantly recognized it for what it was. He jerked back with a muffled scream and bounced his legs frantically, trying to get the tongue off of him.

Rasten grabbed his face with a grip as hard as steel. The guildmaster froze, his face as white as a sheet. Rasten again pointed his thumb at his chest—No Talking. Tears streamed down Gellen's face; his breath came in great, fearful heaves.

Rasten moved his face inches from Gellen's. He opened his mouth to reveal the scarred stump of a tongue that remained to him. It was not much. The Blackcowls had been thorough. They had left him for dead, just as they had left Garth. But Rasten had lived, thanks to Solomon's healing spells—lived to deliver vengeance.

He held the dagger in front of Gellen's mouth. Still gripping him by the face, Rasten squeezed his cheeks, popping open his mouth like a Moonsea oyster. The guildmaster tried to jerk his head away, but Rasten held his grip. He slit the gag. Too terrified to scream, Gellen merely gaped.

Rasten wrinkled his nose in distaste. In his terror, Gellen had soiled himself.

Sitting helpless in that chair, Gellen did not look like the monster Rasten had thought him. Instead, he looked like a frightened little man. Solomon's words resounded in his brain with thunderous impact—*Only weak men . . .* He hesitated.

Thunder boomed, urging him to act—once, twice; cause and effect; deed and vengeance.

He stuck the tip of his rusty dagger into Gellen's mouth, held it hovering over his tongue. A continuous roll of eager thunder shook the roof.

Rasten's hand was shaking.

Only weak men . . . Only weak men. . .

The rumbles of thunder grew in intensity. Still he hesitated.

Drool dripped from the corners of the guildmaster's twitching mouth. His eyes rolled up in his head. Rasten thought of Solomon, of the strength the old man had shown through love, not violence. . . .

Something within Rasten broke. The anger flowed out of him in a torrent. He withdrew the dagger from Gellen's mouth and let it dangle at his side. What was he doing? Gellen slouched in the chair before him, covered in blood, drool, sweat, and feces. The guildmaster was totally broken, yet Rasten felt no satisfaction. He felt nothing for Gellen but pitiful contempt. The hate he had thought inexhaustible had vanished like dew in the sun. Gellen was . . . pathetic, nothing more. Rasten had murdered to find that out.

Thunder rumbled ominously. It sounded impatient. Or disappointed.

Vengeance is empty.

Rasten thought of the old man and smiled. It was his first genuine smile in days.

He lifted the wooden disc from around his neck and threw it on the ground at Gellen's feet. Struck by an inspiration, he unlatched the window shutters, walked over to the door, opened it, stuck his head into the hall, and broke his Oath.

"Huup! Gehluh ih a-acked," he shouted. Immediately, footsteps began running down the hall. They could not have made out that Rasten had said, "Help! Gellen is attacked," but they could tell that something was wrong.

Let them see how their mighty guildmaster has been reduced to a shit-covered simp.

With that, he sprinted back across the room and climbed out the window, mere seconds ahead of the shouting Blackcowls.

He reached the street safely and sped away toward the temple; toward Solomon. The sky at last held its silence, a petulant child in a pouting fit. Rasten smiled again. It was storming now, he thought, but the sky was finally clearing. D

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Enlightenment can penetrate even the helm of iron. —Cuthbertine proverb

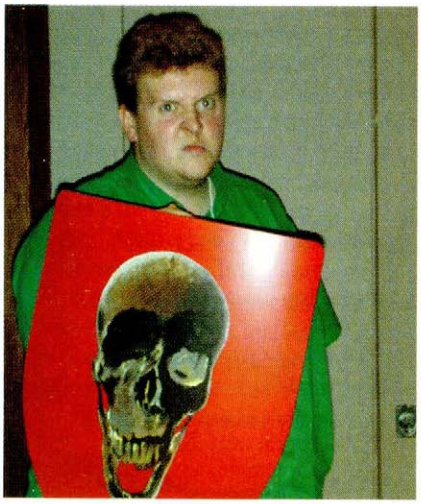
CAMPAIGN NEWS

GEN CON WRAP-UP

As another summer draws to a close, we put another Gen Con Game Fair into the books. The LIVING GREYHAWK campaign premiered at Gen Con 2000, so this summer's show also marked the two-year anniversary of the campaign. We have gone through a lot of changes in those two years, but the campaign is stronger than ever and is still roaring down the tracks.

This year we premiered three new core modules with great success. *Final Reckoning* wrapped up the long-running *Brendingund* series, *Forbidden Echoes* had players going mad as the voice in their heads returned for another round, and *Escape from Tenh* continued the plot started in *Isles of Woe* and moved it in a new and dangerous direction. A few PCs missing since July returned to active duty and a few more disappeared in Tenh, never to be seen again. All told, every Gen Con attendee who came to play a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure got their chance, and more than 500 attendees played each event during the show.

This year's show also featured the debut of brand-new LIVING GREYHAWK prize shields (see picture). We had our master craftsman make up a shield with the heraldry of each GREYHAWK kingdom and faction. We then awarded these shields to the best of the best at the show. William Muench walked away with the best LIVING GREYHAWK Judge award and picked the city of Greyhawk shield for his reward. The top four players also were awarded shields of their choice.



The Young Old One: Circle of Six member Jason Bulmahn *is* Iuz the Evil.
Eyes on the Prize: David Haga, one of three "Best LG Player" winners, and Bill Meunch "Best LG Judge" show off their newfound defenses at the Gen Con award ceremony.

We'll be brining the shields to WINTER FANTASY, so be sure to show up and see if you take your region's shield back home in victory.

BIG BLACK EVIL STONE 1, HEROES 0

This year's Gen Con saw the world premiere of *Forgotten Echoes*, a sequel to last year's *Forbidden Choice*. After each running of the event, the judges carefully tallied the results of a few key plot points. We've tallied up these results and are ready to give them to you. If you have not yet played the event, you may want to skip the next paragraph.

After long-fought battles and a harrowing escape from the clutches of death, most of the heroes managed to recover a large black stone. The voices that echoed from its deep recesses drove many to madness, and in the end the stone was tossed deep into the waters of the Nyr Dyv. As it sank into the black waters of the Lake of Unknown Depths, the madness subsided. The vile voice of the evil stone, however, did not. As a result, the voices will continue to plague some LIVING GREYHAWK characters. Maybe in time a way will be found to rid Oerth of this insidious presence once and for all, but for now the best some heroes can hope for is a strong pint of ale and an unwavering faith to keep the darkness at bay.

The curse of the voice will remain in play until further notice. Don't worry; there will be another chance to even the score. Look for another part of this series to debut later next year.

ECHO AND TENH

A problem has arisen concerning *Echo* and *Escape from Tenh*, two scenarios currently available for play. It is highly recommended that the events be played in order—you'll want to play *Echo* before you play *Escape from Tenh*. If played out of order, it is possible that the outcome from playing *Echo* could result in your character being irrevocably lost. If this occurs, and the player has already played *Escape from Tenh*, the following solution remedies the problem. The character in question is not lost, but instead spends four time units wandering aimlessly on the Ethereal Plane before eventually finding a way home. This loss should be recorded on the *Echo* adventure certificate and cancels any contradictory text already contained on that certificate. This solution applies to heroes who have played the events out of order only. Players who have not yet played *Escape from Tenh* proceed according to the original instructions found in *Echo*.

SPREADING THREAT

Bards across Greyhawk City speak in broken voices when spinning tales concerning the belabored Duchy of Tenh. Some stories tell of survivors seen stumbling out of the region with entire parts of their bodies missing or bearing other ghastly wounds. Perhaps more shocking, they also speak of the complete withdrawal of the Old One's forces from the region. Opinions vary greatly as to what could force Iuz to surrender such a large parcel of his domain so quickly and completely. Rumor has it that some of the more powerful forces in and around the city of Greyhawk are becoming very concerned over this growing dilemma. Fears speak of a new enemy worse than Iuz.

To see what the bards are buzzing about, check out the new *Ether Threat* core storyline, which begins in *Escape from Tenh* (now available) and continues in *Into the Dying Lands*, set to premier in November.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ?

In our efforts to bring you the best campaign possible, we have created a new tool for you, the player, to use. Head over to www.living-greyhawk.com and click "Features." There you will find a survey about the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign. The survey contains some specific questions as well as a general "sound off" section for you to get what you like and dislike about the campaign off your chest. We will be using this information to help steer the campaign as it enters year three, so do not hold back. If you dislike something, say so, but please be polite in doing so. We are looking for constructive criticism and feedback, here. Pointing out what you see as a problem is good, but saying what you think needs to be done to correct it is even better. Also, please be as complete as possible when you take the survey. We will randomly select one respondent to win a prize. While we are not sure what that prize will be, we promise it will be something cool.

WHAT'S OFFICIAL?

Over the past few months there has been some confusion as to what is and is not official for the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign. We have devoted this little corner of the *Journal* to clearing that up for you.

The following are official resources for the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign:

- LIVING GREYHAWK Character Creation Rules
- Rules Updates 1, 2, & 3 (commonly referred to as the RUP's)
- *Players Handbook* (current printing)
- *Dungeon Master* Guide (with errata from website)
- *Monster Manual* (with errata from website)
- *LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer* (current printing)
- Builder Books (Per rules contained in RUP-1. This includes *Sword & Fist, Defenders of the Faith, Tome & Blood, Song & Silence,* and *Master of the Wild,* with errata from website if available.)
- *LIVING GREYHAWK Journal* (Issues 0-5 separate magazines, Issues 6 + contained in *DRAGON Magazine*)
- D&D FAQ (available on the wizards.com website)

Updates to these documents happen often, so check www.living-greyhawk.com regularly to make sure you have the most up-to-date information.

NEW APL ROUNDING RULE

In November of 2001, the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign initiated a new system to determine the correct scenario "challenge level" based upon the relative experience of the characters embarking on the adventure. This Average Party Level (APL) system calculated the average level of the party, along with any animals and companions that might be tagging along. The original APL rule stipulated that when determining the party's average level, the judge was to round up fractional levels. This has led to some characters accidentally "bumping" themselves into more difficult APLs and finding themselves facing dangers too powerful for them.

Starting November 1st, 2002, judges must use standard rounding procedures to determine APL. If the fractional level is .5 or higher, the judge should round up. If it's less than .5, the fraction should be rounded down. This will eliminate the problem of lower-level parties being just on the borderline and finding themselves outclassed, while allowing parties legitimately on the cusp of the next highest APL to take a slightly risky plunge.

What is LIVING GREYHAWK?

LIVING GREYHAWK is the largest, most popular shared-world DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign in the history of gaming. Run under the auspices of the RPGA Network (RPGA), the campaign offers gamers around the world the chance to contribute to the developing history of Oerth by playing specially constructed adventures at conventions, game days, or in the comfort of home. For more information on how you can get involved in the campaign, visit **www.livinggreyhawk.com**

To the Losers Go the Spoils

GREYHAWK'S BEGGAR'S UNION

By Erik Mona · illustrations by Karl Kerschl

As even the most naive caravan boy can tell you, Greyhawk is a city of thieves. From the crumbling tenements of the Slum Quarter to the highest courts of New City, the influence of Greyhawk's Guild of Thieves worms its way throughout the metropolis, secretly pulling along the city's businesses while at the same time imagining and implementing new means by which to divorce those agencies from their lawfully gained coin. The guild's control of illegal activities in a city made famous by its illegal activities approaches absolute. But even Greyhawk's illustrious Guild of Thieves has its competitors.

The city's Beggar's Union, a collection of con artists, panhandlers, and low-grade criminals, has big plans for the future—plans that might cross the path of your LIVING GREYHAWK character.

HISTORY OF THE UNION

Shortly after Lord Mayor Paerinn declared Greyhawk a free city in 498 CY, several thieves and shady merchants banded together to opportunistically corner the city's burgeoning crime market. As a parody of the various business guilds that had sprung up over the last century, the villains called themselves the Guild of Thieves. Not all of Greyhawk's crooks were willing to join the guild, however, and many aligned themselves with rival gangs or operations. These secondary organizations lacked the high-powered corrupt businessmen and politicians so crucial to the success of the Guild of Thieves, however, and this lack proved their collective downfall.

In 510 CY, the Directing Oligarchy issued a secret decree that stipulated the powers of the guild, granting that body dominion over nearly all aspects of criminal activity in the city. Word soon passed through the Greyhawk underworld that members of the guild would receive lighter sentences when captured, and that non-affiliated thieves would be prosecuted with vigor. Understanding that they must allow some means by which non-affiliated dregs might make a dishonest living, the Oligarchy (at this point virtually controlled by the Guild of Thieves) "insured" that begging (a low-profit enterprise unattractive to the guild for several pragmatic reasons) fell outside the guild's charter, effectively allowing anyone to become a panhandler or street con artist without needing the approval of the Guild of Thieves.

By 533 CY, the guild's hold over Greyhawk's commerce became so pervasive that it threatened to drive all legitimate business from the city. A political struggle between those who wished to keep the status quo and those who wished to work hand-in-hand with the city's merchants soon erupted, throwing the guild into an internal war that lasted nearly two years. By the time the bloody conflict came to an end, the reformers stood victorious, but at great cost. Wounded and unable to enforce their dominance, the thieves watched impotently as several of the city's criminal outcasts banded together in a rival organization jokingly called the Beggars' Union, a mocking play on the Guild of Thieves' ostentatious title. The unionists knew that the guild would regain its strength in time, and rather than attempting to snuff out the weakened organization, the beggars instead chose to standardize and dominate those areas of crime that had been left to them in 510 CY. By the time the Guild of Thieves had regained its footing, the beggars were entrenched.

WAR IN THE STREETS

The two guilds existed in a state of grudging tolerance for years, the thieves generally viewing the beggars as low-class bottom feeders and the beggars always trying to gain grudging acceptance from their underworld competitors by pulling off more and more daring gambits. In 571 CY, Theobald, the union's preening, corpulent Beggarmaster, initiated the most daring gambit of all.

Long tired of his organization's inferior status, Theobald secretly hired a number of independent rogues to train his apprentices in the arts of thievery. He then had the renegade thieves murdered to cover his subterfuge, hoping one day to control a secret elite cadre of beggar-thieves who swore allegiance only to him. He squirreled away the proceeds from his illicit thieving operations in order to pay for mercenaries and sellswords, who he hoped would protect him from the inevitable backlash from the Thieves' Guild. If he could pull it off, Theobald hoped he might leverage his private army against his enemies in the

city government. In his most grandiose, narcotic-smoke-addled moments, he even fancied himself in the Lord Mayor's chair.

It was not to be. When an unsanctioned thievery operation resulted in the murder of a guild thief, Theobald's enemies had the ammunition they needed to wipe the smug, slovenly smear from the face of the Slum Quarter. The Beggarmaster's enemies in the city government, including a furious Lord Mayor Nerof Gasgal, turned a blind eye to the guild's harsh retribution. In the month of Harvester, Greyhawk's thieves made war on the beggars, slaying dozens of them in a raid on the Beggarmaster's own Palace of Trash. Theobald vanished in the conflict, and most expected the union itself to disappear shortly thereafter.

Instead, the canny Arentol, then Guildmaster of Thieves, bargained with the few remaining master beggars and established a new relationship between guild and union. Henceforth, the Beggars' Union would serve as scouts and information brokers for the Guild of Thieves, donating a substantial portion of their earnings to their superiors in the guild. In return, the beggars received de facto control of the Slum Quarter and were held to an even more restricted list of "acceptable" crimes. The living master beggars elected a treacherous former plaything of Theobald named Gaspar to serve as the new Beggarmaster, fully expecting him to be assassinated within the year.

Gaspar filled his inner circle with the best surviving union members and wasn't shy about recruiting rogues from other parts of the Flanaess to help him lead the organization. His first recruit was a former lover from Zeif whom he had met during his early adventuring days, a bold burglar named Haarkon Diardra who had been exiled from his position as a master in the Ceshra Thieves' Guild after the disappearance of the sultanate's crown jewels (which remain unrecovered). Fleeing Zeifan assassins, Diardra sought succor in Greyhawk, where he soon joined Gaspar. As taskmaster for the union, Diardra taught new beggars, paying particular attention to Gaspar's elite private order of indentured children.

A more important addition came in the form of the frugal Simeon Hellwater, a long-time unionist who became the organization's chief treasurer following the troubles of 571. Hellwater's diligent bookkeeping and conservative point of view encouraged Gaspar to focus on improving the margins of those activities ceded to the union by the Thieves' Guild, hence increasing the profit of begging operations without risking the ire of the union's most powerful enemies. Under Gaspar and Hellwater, the union became more successful than ever before, and relations with the Guild of Thieves brightened considerably.

RECENT HAPPENINGS

But Gaspar could sense that something was wrong. Old Arentol, Guildmaster of Thieves, died shortly after the 571 war and was replaced by his second in command, the wily Org Nenshen. The change in leadership brought a change in style for the thieves, and Gaspar soon discovered that his organization had sprung a leak, since the thieves often anticipated his moves before he had even committed to them. To test the union, the Beggarmaster faked rumors of a cult of Kurell that sought to encroach on the union's activities. Gaspar vanished during a personal investigation of that cult shortly after the Greyhawk Wars, leaving many to think that he'd finally taken one risk too many.

Gaspar had planned to leave the city, anyway. During the hiatus he ventured to distant Zeif, paying off the sultan's assassins with coins skimmed from Beggars' Union profits. It took him more than a year to trek to the Baklunish lands and back, and in that time, his traitor didn't fail to disappoint.

Long in the employ of the Thieves' Guild as a mole within the union, Simeon Hellwater took Gaspar's absence as an opportunity to set himself up as Beggarmaster. He framed the union's loyal spymaster as an agent of the Scarlet Brotherhood and paid the Assassins' Guild to deal with Haarkon Diardra, whose body was never recovered. He named himself King of Beggars and filled the union's inner circle with rogues hand-picked for their loyalty to the Thieves' Guild.

Gaspar returned to Greyhawk in 592 CY, pardon in hand, to find "his" union in shambles, a puppet of the Thieves' Guild lorded over by the maddeningly efficient, humorless Hellwater.

News of his lover's fate sent him into a rage, but rather than strike out blindly, Gaspar kept to the shadows and plotted his return to power. He and a few beggars who remained loyal to him burglarized Hellwater's stately home in the Artisans' Quarter, carting off his valuable art and wealth to Dyvers, where it was fenced to provide the funds for Diardra's *true resurrection*. Gaspar and his associates regained the guild simply by walking in the front door and cutting the treacherous Simeon Hellwater to pieces.

Despite the troubles of the last year, Hellwater's coup may turn out to be one of the best things to have ever happened to Gaspar. His ostentatious return to the union boosted his credibility with many members, and the revelation of Hellwater's ties to the Thieves' Guild has bolstered union members' support of their "independent" leader.

Best of all, Gaspar recently discovered that Hellwater had been using the union's impressive information network to gather embarrassing facts about several city officials, including members of the Directing Oligarchy. Gaspar jovially threatened Guildmaster Org Nenshen about revealing the files to the directors as evidence of the thieves' treachery (which was illegal even by the city's exceptionally lax standards). He privately pushes to have himself added to the Directing Oligarchy in exchange for dropping the whole affair. Like Theobald before him, Beggarmaster Gaspar has big plans in politics, and hopes one day to become Lord Mayor of the City of Greyhawk.

A BEGGAR'S LIFE

Union members break down into two types. Common beggars—legitimately poverty-stricken, diseased, or handicapped panhandlers—pay the union a small fee in exchange for the right to beg legally, a limited license to beg in a certain part of the city, and the promise of union help if they should get themselves into trouble. It's impossible to say how many such beggars exist, but their numbers easily top 500.

These common beggars always bear the sign of the open palm, a wooden medallion worn around the neck. Begging without such a symbol is a crime punishable by a sentence to the city workhouse, but the greater danger comes from affiliated thieves or beggars, who have no appreciation for independent agents. Common beggars generally get along well with the city's thieves, as the relationship between guild and union mandates that beggars must always pass along information regarding potential marks to members of the guild, who in turn give generously to beggars whenever they are encountered. A successful job that capitalized on beggar-provided information sees a 10% tithe paid directly to the Beggar's Union. If lucky, the beggar scout receives 1% of the total take.

Despite the excessive 50% tax on earnings due to the union, a great number of common beggars make a healthy living off Greyhawk's credulous populace.

The heart of the union comes not from these rank-and-file panhandlers, but from the Beggarmaster's own private association of highly trained charlatans, con artists, and contortionists who live at the Palace of Trash, the union's gaudy headquarters in the Slum Quarter. These beggars undertake and oversee most of the guild's scam and outright theft operations.

THE INNER CIRCLE

In addition to at least a half-dozen full masters, the Beggars' Union supports a small "inner circle" of leaders. Gaspar has not yet filled the positions of treasurer or spymaster, and he is considering selecting replacements from outside the union, seeing the "inside" recruitment pool as hopelessly compromised by the Thieves' Guild.

Beggarmaster Gaspar, Male Human Rog3/Ftr8: CR 11; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 3d6+6 plus 8d10+16; hp 90; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Atk +16/11 (1d6+7/crit 12-20, *+2 keen scimitar*), or +13/8 (1d6+3/crit x3, masterwork mighty composite shortbow [+3]); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +10, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +10, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +10, Hide +9, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +5, Pick Pocket +6, Read Lips +8, Search +7, Spot +13*; Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Critical (scimitar), Iron Will, Leadership, Mobility, Quick Draw, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

*Includes +5 circumstance bonus from *eyes of the eagle*.

Possessions: +1 glamered studded leather, +2 keen scimitar, cloak of resistance +1, eyes of the eagle, potion of invisibility, potion of expeditious retreat, potion of cure moderate wounds x2, masterwork buckler, masterwork mighty composite shortbow [+3] with 20 arrows, shoddy noble clothes, costume jewelry.

Armed with Simeon Hellwater's files, Gaspar has high hopes for the future but remains worried about the affairs of the present. A driven man with a playful, somewhat effeminate demeanor, the Beggarmaster seldom allows others to see his worry, masking his calculation and pragmatism behind a mask of joviality.

The self-proclaimed King of Beggars quite literally clothes himself in the finery of a noble, having fished most of his wardrobe from the garbage of New City's most prestigious clotheshounds. He fancies costume jewelry, especially gold and silver necklaces and nonmagical rings.

Gaspar's recent betrayal hardened him to the point that he now shows affection only for his deceased paramour, the taskmaster Haarkon Diardra (CG male human Rog12), and while he is proud of his beggars and respects more than a few of them, every single one is expendable in the pursuit of his goal to join the Directing Oligarchy and finally get some respect.

UNION SERVICES

Although the Beggar's Union exists primarily to enrich its leadership and members, the organization offers a number of services that might be useful to adventurers visiting or inhabiting the free city.

Location: Few have as many contacts or know the city streets as well as members of the Beggars' Union. For a fee of 5 gp, the union will locate anyone within the city of Greyhawk. Searches last from a matter of hours to several days, and no refund is paid if the quarry cannot be located.

Guides: Young urchins in the employ of the union flock to the city gates, offering to act as guides to travelers and merchants for just 1 gp. For a larger, secret fee, the guides

will point out secret passages, false walls, and sewer shortcuts. Only occasionally do the children lead their charges to a dangerous Slum Quarter neighborhood, promising that they could remember the way to safety for "only a few coppers more."

Misinformation: Many beggars delight in using their extensive network of snitches and spies to spread false or damaging information about a person, with fees ranging wildly depending upon the smeared individual's social status. Beggars often dress in finery, feigning a certain amount of class to lend veracity to their slanderous gossip. Of course, the union is not above selling out its own clients to former victims, essentially playing one side against the other in a war of hearsay.

Scouting: Anyone curious about the movements of a certain ship, cart, or person would be well-served to hire a beggar, as the eyes of the union are everywhere. Compared to the often-inaccurate logs of comings and goings kept at the city gates, a beggar's memory often can be the best source of information available. For a retainer of 2 gp per day, a beggar will remain at a single location, keeping close watch for their employer.

Information Brokering: It took Simeon Hellwater to suggest that what the beggars in the field saw and heard might very likely be worth more to the union than the money they could convince others to give them out of pity. People say the dumbest, most private things in front of a "harmless" cripple or "drunken" homeless wretch. The Beggars' Union, of course, is more than happy to sell that information to the highest bidder.

COMMON CONS

Greyhawk beggars employ countless tricks and stratagems to convince marks to hand over their cash. Here are a few of their more popular street cons:

Hot Coins: By "chance," a beggar dressed in ordinary street clothes comes across a planted purse filled with gold and platinum coins just as a mark happens to walk by. The beggar points out his find, revealing the purse's contents in a hushed but obviously excited voice. "This must be worth at least 100 gold!" the beggar exclaims, opening the purse to reveal the valuable coins within. The beggar "discovers" the monogram of a well-known, benevolent noble on the purse and mentions that the kindly old man likely will offer a handsome reward for the prompt return of the coins.

The beggar confides that he would return the pouch personally if not for the fact that his ship sets sail for Nyrond in the next hour. In return for a good-faith payment of 30 gp, the beggar will allow the mark to return the purse and collect the reward. Once the exchange has been made, the beggar hands over the monogrammed purse and beats a hasty retreat back to his ship, having surreptitiously switched the purse with one filled with worthless iron and brass coins only moments before, right under the mark's nose.

The con works best in seedier neighborhoods like the River Quarter, where the mark is more likely to consider simply keeping the purse rather than settling on some fractional reward. A mark's greed, says the beggars' credo, is the best weapon to use against him.

Guilty Conscience: Popular among Greyhawk's youngest beggars, this con requires a small, expensive-looking trinket, often a broken sculpture or plate fished out of a High or Garden Quarter trashbin. In a busy part of town, the beggar collides with her mark, dropping the now-broken trinket to the ground. Struggling with tears, the beggar explains that the item belongs to a harsh master or parent, and that she is sure to be beaten for breaking the object. Most marks immediately offer to compensate the youngster for the broken trinket, paying a beggar-provided estimate of the item's value often several times its actual worth. Best of all, once the mark has left, the "useless" trinket can be scooped up and used again.

The Fake Fight: This con requires at least three beggars, one of whom must be a child or someone capable of appearing old and feeble. The three set up in an alleyway or courtyard just off a major thoroughfare. When a group of marks (preferably a party of inexperienced, foreign adventurers) approaches, the two "able-bodied" beggars attempt to hassle and sometimes even beat the weaker beggar, who cries for help. When the rescue-minded adventurers shuck their backpacks in an attempt to fight the bullies, the child or "old" beggar sprints for their set-aside items, quickly scrambling through a tight building abutment, sewer grating, or small hole in the wall, packs in hand. The other two beggars immediately flee in two different directions, attempting to use their strong command of the city's winding streets against their pursuers. Due to the dangers involved in attempting to con powerful adventurers, the union attempts this scam only on those it has previously seen in action (perhaps in response to another con attempt). If a group has access to *lightning bolt* or *fireball*, they're likely safe from facing such a risky gambit.

Dungeoncraft

Preparing Large Encounters

by Monte Cook

Beginning with this article, *Dungeon Master's Guide* author Monte Cook takes the reigns of the popular "Dungeoncraft" column. This version of the column, unlike its original incarnation, consists of short series that focus on building encounters in a specific environment, building specific parts of a campaign world, and handling other unusual situations that arise in D&D. As always, send your thoughts, comments, and questions to **scailmail@paizopublishing.com**.

GETTING STARTED

When it comes to a combat encounter, D&D probably shines most bright with 4-5 players fighting a single monster. In small encounters like this, everyone around the table is running one character—even the DM, and combat moves quickly, as it should. But sometimes the adventure calls for the PCs to go up against a large number of foes, sometimes a large number of players all want to attend a session, and sometimes both happen at the same time.

Large encounters require some extra prep work from the DM. Without some special attention, an encounter with a lot of foes, a lot of PCs, or both, can easily bog down. The greatest danger occurs when players have to wait a long time between their individual turns and get bored or when the DM gets overwhelmed and can't keep track of everything. Both situations make the game less fun for all involved and can become a serious threat to the continuation of the campaign.

There are some ways to avoid this. In fact, you can make a large encounter an extraordinarily fun and memorable experience for everyone.

Know the Characters and Players

This is the one advantage that you will always have over a game designer who writes an encounter for a published product. Use it. You know how many players are supposed to show up for the session, what the class mix is, and the sorts of tactics they usually employ (and don't say "none"—even charging wildly is a tactic).

Encourage the players to reread the Speeding Up Combat sidebar on page 126 of the *Player's Handbook,* and help them remember to use those tips to keep combat moving quickly. Make them aware that it's their job to help you move things along at a good pace, especially in a large encounter. Sometimes, you can even quietly recruit a couple of them to act as subtle shepherds to keep things moving. You know which of them would be good choices. They're your friends, after all.

Estimate the Length of the Encounter

This can be hard for a novice DM, but once you've got a little experience, you can predict about how long an encounter will take—both in real-world terms and in the game.

In real-world terms, try to figure out ahead of time how long a given encounter will take—an hour? Three hours? It depends heavily on your playing style, but in general, a group of four characters can probably take care of a single encounter appropriate to their level in about an hour—that assumes some introduction time, time for someone to run and get something to drink, and some time to deal with the consequences of the end of the encounter (finding the monster's treasure, talking to the city guards who show up after the brawl, healing the wounded, and so on).

An encounter involving many characters takes longer. As a general rule, eight players take about twice as long to run through an encounter appropriate for them as four do. On the NPC side of things, one to four creatures make a pretty standard encounter, five to eight might increase the encounter length by fifty percent, and nine to twenty usually doubles the time the encounter takes to finish.

In game time, most encounters last between 3 to 6 rounds. Increasing the number of PCs decreases, rather than increases the rounds. Thus, a group of six characters can handle an encounter appropriate for them in a fewer number of rounds than a group of four. Increasing the number of NPCs, however, tends to increase the number of rounds. Why? Look at it this way: If a CR 8 monster with 50 hit points faces four PCs who each inflict 15 points of damage per round, the monster dies in one round. However, the same four PCs take 3 rounds to defeat twelve CR 1 monsters with 10 hp each, even though they are probably a much simpler challenge than the single monster. It doesn't always work this way, though, because area-effect spells can wipe out large groups of weak creatures faster than one or two more powerful creatures—so don't forget to consider the PCs' spellcasting tactics.

For example, let's say you've got ten player characters: two clerics, two sorcerers, two monks, a fighter, a fighter/rogue, a paladin, and a wizard. With them, they have another monk cohort, a charmed monster, and two warrior followers, for a total of fourteen characters—a massive group. The average level is 10. This group is likely to overcome an appropriate challenge (EL 13 or so—see sidebar) in 3-4 rounds, depending on the type of encounter, but that encounter might very well take two hours.

Let's assume the PCs are going into an evil temple. There are two outer rooms, each with challenges equal to their level. Beyond that is the main temple—a vast chamber with multiple levels and many foes. This is a big encounter, well above the level of an "appropriate" challenge. It's a huge climactic fight. Assuming the first two encounters take about 4 hours combined, the main encounter will probably take that much time on its own. That's 8 hours of game play. If you normally play in the evenings, you might want to make such an adventure something that spans two sessions. Otherwise, that's a very full Saturday afternoon and evening.

LAYOUT

Size and layout both affect the encounter a great deal, so prepare the encounter site very carefully. For example, if you estimate the encounter will take 3-5 rounds, you know the dwarf fighter in plate armor isn't going to move very far in the huge chamber you have planned out. The monks, however, might run a full circuit of the same chamber twice in that time.

Layout can make NPC tactics more obvious and simpler too. Restricting NPCs to a certain area to stay in provides a simple way for you to control their actions and gives the appearance of coordinated action.

In our example of the evil temple, the first two encounters happen in fairly standard "dungeon rooms," but the main fight is in a room with three levels. On the first level, a long gallery blocked off by walls of iron bars holds a few archers. The PCs can't get at the archers easily. Those archers can't move out of the gallery, and so there's literally nothing for them to do but fire arrows. That makes them an interesting challenge and easy to run at the same time.

On the second, main level, evil priests conduct a ritual. The PCs can reach this level via a set of stairs (all the while under fire from the archers in the gallery). The clerics don't leave this level because they are conducting the ritual. There are, however, some guards and mercenaries who come down from this level to fight the PCs if the PCs don't come to them, although spellcasters might remain there and cast spells no matter where the PCs are.

Lastly, on a small, very high level—a sort of perch—the leader of the evil cult has taken up position to launch spells at intruders. He doesn't move. If the PCs want to fight him, they've got to figure out a way to get up there.

This, then, is a very dynamic layout. Since you know the capabilities of your group, you can predict where each member will probably go and who they will end up fighting. The dwarf fighter probably won't leave the lowest level, but he'll have plenty of foes to fight. The monks will run up to the main level, and one might even use her *abundant step* to take herself (and possibly someone else) up to confront the high priest. And so on. As always, be prepared for the PCs to do the unexpected. We all know that no plan survives confrontation with the players. . . .

APPROPRIATE CHALLENGES

Scaling Encounters for Group Sizes Other than Four

There's a rule that says if you double the foes of an encounter, you increase the EL by +2. If a creature has a CR of 3 (and alone is thus an EL 3), two of them have an EL of 5.

The same sort of rule can apply to PCs. The CR/EL system is based on four characters. If you have eight PCs, they can handle a challenge of their level +2. Using the same math, an appropriate challenge for six PCs is level +1, and twelve PCs can handle an encounter with EL level +3.

It works similarly going down. An EL level -2 encounter is appropriate for two PCs, and level -1 is appropriate for three characters.

As always, this is just a baseline, but it should prove to be a helpful rule of thumb.

GIVE EVERYONE SOMETHING TO DO

Clearly, a large encounter is almost always an important one. It might be the climax of an adventure, the union of two adventuring groups working together, or just a really big fight. In something so important, you don't want anyone to get left out. Unfortunately, in a big encounter, it's easy for someone to get left out (particularly if there are a lot of PCs).

The Eighth Rule of Dungeoncraft: An important encounter should give every player something to do.

Probably the biggest threat to everyone having something to contribute is if the large group has multiple characters of the same type. The fighter, the barbarian, and the paladin can't all go toe-to-toe with the mercenary leader (well, they can, but that leaves the remaining characters exposed to the rest of the mercenaries). Likewise, multiple clerics versus undead become redundant. Here's where knowing the characters comes into play. If you know that there are three tough melee combatants in the group, give the group three to four tough melee combatant foes rather than just one.

If the group is large, it might behoove you to provide some non-fight-related things to do in the encounter. Prisoners chained to a wall need to be saved before a stray *fireball* spread gets them. Someone's got to grab the *crystal ball* from the table before it falls to the floor and breaks. These kinds of things are great because almost anyone can do them, so whichever character might be left with not much to do can do

something completely different from everyone else.

You can place challenges in the encounter that only one character can deal with, or that one character can deal with best. If you know that there's a druid in the group who might otherwise not have a lot to do during a typical dungeon fight, place a bunch of trained animal guards with the foes for the druid to handle or charm. Put a magic-immune foe into an encounter for the fighter to deal with. Place a spellcaster on a high ledge where only the ranger specializing with a bow can get him. The thing to keep in mind is that each of these should only be one part of a large encounter. If the whole encounter involves a magic-immune foe, the spellcasters have little to do. In a really important encounter, you can place a number of such challenges, tailored to various characters in the group. Then many, if not all, of the PCs have something to do that they do best.

In our example, the cultists have captured some prisoners and are preparing to sacrifice them. A number of the lesser priests are conducting a ritual on the main level, while the high priest and some other defenders (including some undead) intend on protecting those conducting the ritual from the foes they know are coming. This means that some PCs can confront the defenders, some can go toe-to-toe with the high priest (on his high perch), some can try to stop the ritual, and some can try to free the prisoners. Lots to do—which is a good thing in an encounter with so many PCs.

PREPARE THE NPCS

A great way to prepare NPCs is on index cards. Put the stats you need on the card in a manner that makes sense to you. Don't use a statistics block as found in an adventure if that's not the easiest way for you to find information. Make sure that there's plenty of space on the card to write notes before and during the session. If a NPC has a *potion of bull's strength* and you know she drinks it before the encounter starts, just write the character's finished strength on the card. If a wizard has already cast *mage armor*, write down his total AC. Remember, no one has to use these cards but you. No one's going to be looking over your shoulder wondering at your math.

Plot out at least a simple action for each NPC. This makes things move along much more quickly. Since you know where the fight is going to take place beforehand, you have a big advantage in doing this. Write simple tactics on each NPC's card like "charge and attack," "heal wounded allies," or "protect the door to the north." Follow these commands as best you can during the battle. This not only makes things go quickly, but it makes it seem as though the NPCs have done a little planning and each member is carrying out his part.

Preparing NPC Allies

In a big encounter, the DM might have to run some NPC allies as well as a number of foes. Treat them just like the foes in terms of preparation. Fill out an index card for each, and give each a task (sure, the NPC ally doesn't know what's going to happen ahead of time, but you do). Figure, for example, that the warrior followers are going stay in the rear to watch the PC's backs, the monk cohort will charge into the fray, and the charmed monster will stick by the mage who charmed it, protecting its "friend."

Preparing Spellcasters

This might sound like sacrilege, but you don't have to write out every spell a spellcaster has prepared. Most NPC spellcasters never last long enough to cast all their spells. Worse, if you're dealing with casters of 8th level or higher, all their spells often present so many options that it slows things down in game play. You're much better off writing something like "cast *shield, fireball,* and *magic missile*" on the individual's card. Write spells in the order you want the NPC to cast them, and cross them out as each round goes by and you do it. If spellcasters already have some spells cast on themselves, like *cat's grace* or *mage armor*, write that on the sheet too (it's useful for when someone uses *dispel magic*).

PREPARING THE RULES AND YOURSELF

If you know that the NPCs are going to try to grapple the PCs, attempt to disarm them, or try to bull rush them off a ledge, put bookmarks or Post-It Notes on those pages of the *Player's Handbook*. You know you'll be referring to those rules, so shorten the time it takes to do so. Mark pages in the *Monster Manual* that you'll be referring to as well. Post-Its are great for this because they not only mark the page, but you can keep track of the monster's hit points on them as well.

Read the spells that the NPCs are going to cast shortly before the game starts if possible. Make shorthand notes to yourself if you need to, right on the index card you've prepared for each of them.

If you know that the PCs are likely to make touch attacks, pre-figure the touch attack ACs of the NPCs (if the PCs never make touch attacks, don't bother). If the NPCs are likely to grapple, make note of the bonus that they'll use. In short, don't wait until the game session is in full swing to do the math.

READY TO PLAY

The key to having a large encounter in your game, whether it be with a large group of PCs, NPCs or both, is preparation. Don't get overwhelmed with all that there is to keep track of. Remember that a smooth game session is more important than rules accuracy. Encouraging the players to not only move things along but to help remember the rules can make a beleaguered DM's job a lot easier.

Next month, part two of this article series deals with actually running a large encounter.

PHIL FOGLIO'S WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL & DIXIE

TODAY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT **ROGUES.**

WHICH, UNTIL RECENTLY, WERE CALLED **THIEVES.**

TRADITIONALLY A ROGUE WAS A THIEF, TO BE SURE, BUT A THIEF WITH **STYLE.**

♫ PARDON ME FAIR LADIES, BUT I MUST RELIEVE YOU OF THESE EXCESS VALUABLES ♫ FOR I AM THE **SINGING BANDIT** ♫

PEOPLE **LIKE** TO PLAY ROGUES. YOU GET TO BE AS WICKED AS ANYONE ELSE, BUT YOU'VE GOT SO MUCH CHARISMA, PANACHE AND SAVIOR FAIRE THAT YOUR VICTIMS LOVE YOU **ANYWAY.**

OH SINGING BANDIT! AGAIN YOU HAVE MADE A FOOL OF MY OAFISH HUSBAND, THE DUKE D'FATHEAD! TAKE MY JEWELS, BUT FIRST... LET ME SHOW YOU MY... APPRECIATION~

ROGUES USUALLY WIND UP EMPLOYED BY SECRET SOCIETIES, GOVERNMENTS, OR WIZARDS WHO NEED SERVICES THAT THUGS ARE TOO STUPID TO DO, AND HONEST ADVENTURERS WON'T TOUCH.

HM – YOU WANT ME TO SNEAK INTO THE TEMPLE OF YUF, AND REPLACE THE **FAKE** JEWEL WITH THIS **REAL** ♫ JEWEL? ♫

YES – END CURSE ON ME.

THE PRIESTS OF ♫ YUF DID THIS?

NO – THEIR INSURENCE COMPANY!

WHENEVER A PLAYER WANTED TO PLAY A THIEF, WHAT THEY **WANTED** TO PLAY WAS A **ROGUE.**

HA! NOT **ME!** I JUST WANT TO ATTACK PEOPLE AND TAKE THEIR STUFF AND LOOT THEIR TEMPLES AND CASTLES!

Ah- A **FIGHTER.**

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BUT THESE DAYS THE TERM "ROGUE" APPLIES TO **ALL** THIEVES, INCLUDING THUGS, CUTPURSES, KIDNAPPERS, BURGLARS, GOONS, HOODS, MOBSTERS, RACKETEERS, PUNKS, AND WORSE

OY! I'M A ROGUE. GIMME YOUR PURSE!

AND THEM FANCY CLOTHES!

AND THEN **I'LL** SELL HER TO THE **KNACKERS!**

eek!

BUT THERE'LL ALWAYS BE PEOPLE WHO CAN PLAY A TRUE ROGUE...

♫ STAND BACK BASE VILLAINS! ♫

UNFORTUNATLY.

♫ SHE'S MINE! ♫

CALL ME!

KNACKER

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Turning Good Games Into Great Games

by Glen Veltum

For many Dungeon Masters, writing original adventures is the most enjoyable part of playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. All too often, however, these original adventures lack the impact and excitement of published modules, even though the DM dreams up intriguing villains, clever traps, and memorable roleplaying opportunities. No matter how much work the DM puts in, he just can't completely connect with the players, and the excitement fizzles before the pizza arrives. Many DMs assume that the problem lies in the encounters they create, believing that they must be writing boring or bad encounters. Oftentimes, the problem is simply how the adventure is paced. Pacing is a tool used by authors, filmmakers, and video game designers to hold an audience's attention and give a story life. Great storytellers establish a fluid pace without really thinking about it, but it's an aspect of adventure design that is often ignored. However, once you know what to look for, you can study almost any great story and see how the pace of the action works to hold the story together.

HIGH POINTS, LOW POINTS

It is a common misconception that pace is synonymous with rising action—that all the DM needs to do is make each opponent tougher than the last until the party fights the final villain. By itself, rising action usually isn't enough to create a successful adventure because one fight after another can lead to a monotonous blur of bloodletting and die rolling. For an adventure to have a rhythm that works, there must be peaks and valleys, with battles regularly broken up with other encounters that give the action a chance to breathe.

Consider, for example, the film *The Empire Strikes Back*. The scenes of the *Millennium Falcon*'s hair-raising flight through the asteroid field are broken up with scenes of Luke meeting Yoda. If the film hadn't cut back and forth between these two scenes, Luke's training sequence would seem to crawl by, while the tension in the asteroid field would have been impossible to maintain. Along the same lines, the *Baldur's Gate* computer game and its sequels do an excellent job of interspersing combat with NPC interactions and general exploration. Usually, there are no more than two or three fights before the player finds a journal that he's supposed to read or a character to talk to.

Of course, when most DMs sit down to write an adventure, they typically focus more on plot, monsters, traps, and treasure than on how all those elements will blend and affect the pace of the story. Establishing an enjoyable flow to your adventures doesn't mean learning a whole new way to write scenarios, it only means learning a few new tricks to add to your dungeon design arsenal.

For example, perhaps a DM wants to try out a new adventure on her players. Recognizing that the rogue in the party hasn't had much of a chance to shine lately, the DM decides to map out an ancient crypt crowded with the most devious traps she can concoct. Knowing that disarming traps won't make for a good climax for her adventure, she decides to populate the bottom level of the crypt with skeletons and mummies, leading up to a battle with a "boss mummy" with some unique magical powers. For flavor, she gives the mummy a name, Ashetek, and decides to place a new magic item in his sarcophagus, along with a scroll that hints at how the magic item works. Finally, she sketches out some details about a nearby town and comes up with a plot hook to get the PCs to explore the crypt. Her work complete, she heads to the gaming session with "Ashetek's Sepulcher" ready to play.

While this adventure has all the elements of a good story, the encounter types are all bunched together: role-playing at the beginning, traps and puzzles in the middle, numerous fights at the end, and some investigation tacked on as an afterthought. The DM shouldn't be too surprised when, after the third trap in a row, the players seem less than interested in tackling the puzzle-box that opens the inner crypt. By the same token, by the time the characters wade through hordes of undead to reach Ashetek's burial chamber, they're ready for a break, not another fight to the death.

ENCOUNTER TYPES

The key to avoiding this kind of monotony is identifying the different

encounter types in the adventure and organizing them in a way that brings a dynamic rhythm to the night's play. With this in mind, there are two basic rules to establishing a good pace:

1. **Alternate combat with other types of encounters.** For every fight, there's got to be a break. If you can read through the encounters in order and not find any battles back-to-back, you've made a solid start toward setting a good pace. Don't be worried that you're not giving your players enough action with this formula; remember, it takes a lot longer to resolve combat encounters than any other type, so the players will still spend most of the night locked in battle. Even if your group is full of players who prefer hack-and-slash, a brawl every other encounter will still sate their bloodlust. They're also going to want a chance to use those skills they've been buying every level, and that's where the other encounters come in.

2. **Vary the non-combat encounters as much as possible.** Too often, DMs get into a rut by using only one or two types of non-combat encounters. While this is still better than nothing but battle after battle, variety keeps things interesting and is a key ingredient of good pacing. Keep your players guessing by mixing up the encounters throughout the adventure.

Non-Combat Encounter Types

Perhaps coming up with a number of different non-combat encounters seems daunting, but don't worry—it's easier than it seems. Below, you'll find a list of the main types of non-combat events. Use these as a guide, and let them spark a wealth of other ideas for bringing down the pace between fights.

- **Traps:** Long a staple of D&D adventures, traps give a break from combat while maintaining a high level of tension and suspense, which is why they're perfect for building tension early in the adventure or sandwiching between fights late in the scenario. Players usually expect to find traps either at the front door of the Maze of Doom or guarding the inner chambers of the Dread Overlord. As far as pacing goes, both locations are good ones.
- **NPC Interaction:** These encounters tend to bunch up at the beginning of the adventure, especially in dungeon scenarios. Often, the heroes talk to practically everyone in the village before setting off for the haunted valley, and then the players utter not another word "in character" for the rest of the night. For the most part, there's nothing wrong with having several roleplaying opportunities early in the adventure; it gives everyone a chance to get in character and provides a nice contrast to the life-or-death struggles to come later. But NPC interaction can also provide a break from fighting later in the night. For example, when the party frees the captives from the troglodytes' dungeons, they can talk to the prisoners and learn that an evil water naga is leading the troglodytes. The party might even argue with the NPCs about whether the adventurers should press on or escort the prisoners back to safety. When placing roleplaying encounters into an adventure, remember that they should become shorter and more intense as the adventure nears its conclusion. You don't want the party interacting with the doddering old sage just before it enters the naga's lair—that's a time for raised voices, startling revelations, and desperate pleas to Tempus!
- **Information:** Any time the characters find information, there's going to be a break in the pace, whether the DM plans for it or not. The players are going to stop and talk about what they've found, especially if the DM has prepared a player handout, such as a faded map, a journal entry, or cryptic hieroglyphics from the druid's monolith. Note that breaking the pace with a handout doesn't even require its own encounter location, because the players can find it in the same area where they've just had a fight. After reading the handout and talking it over, they're ready for the giant spiders in the next room.
- **Skill Checks:** Climbing sheer walls, navigating water-filled passages, or

FREE WILL AND PACE

Unlike a movie director or author, the DM cannot completely control the rhythm of her story; she has to leave room for the free will of the players. Occasionally, the players will bog down the pace of the story by going off track or getting stuck in a way the DM had not anticipated. Sometimes there is nothing the DM can do to rescue the players without being heavy-handed, and so she might elect to let them thrash around a while, no matter what it does to the pace of the adventure. For the most part, though, the DM doesn't have to sacrifice the pace of her story to give the players free will. She just has to work a little magic behind the curtain.

Encounter mix: If the adventure has a good variety of encounter types, it's pretty likely that the players won't keep running into similar situations right after one another. The party is going to have a hard time blundering into fight after fight without eventually coming across a NPC encounter or a skill-check situation. If the adventure is set in a dungeon, this is even easier to achieve by simply placing the encounters so it's impossible to get in a rut.

Timed Encounters: Many city adventures combine site-based encounters with events that happen on a timeline. To keep the game from bogging down, the DM can usually just place the timed encounters earlier or later as needed. For example, originally the sahuagin were supposed to attack the village at noon. But when noon rolls around, the characters are just finishing a lengthy fight in the assassin's guildhall. The DM can simply delay the attack until after the party has interrogated the captured grandfather of assassins, improving the drama of the sahuagin invasion in the process.

Wandering Monsters: Nothing gets an adventure moving like a dozen displacer beasts rushing at the party from behind a crumbling ruin. Wandering monsters should almost never be used at random by DMs who want to carefully craft the pace of their story. Instead, keep those wandering monster tables handy for when the players are stalled in a non-combat encounter and need a shove to get them moving again.

tracking the troll back to its lair are all situations that call for skill checks. Encounters like these are perfect for breaking up battles in the middle portions of an adventure; they slow down the pace to a degree, but they are usually straightforward enough that the players can tackle them quickly and move on to another fight.

• **Visual Description:** While it may not technically count as an encounter, taking time to describe a location in detail can slow the pace down and give players a chance to catch their breath. Whether it's a dusty torture chamber strewn with grizzly instruments of pain or a stunning vista of the City of Brass, a detailed description is a chance for the DM to add reality and texture to her world. Often, a DM can add an entire encounter that serves no other purpose than to paint a memorable image in the players' minds. Creative DMs can use this encounter like an "establishing shot" in a movie, giving the players a sense of place and lending scope to the entire dungeon.

• **Riddles and Puzzles:** Distinct from traps, puzzles cannot be resolved by a simple die roll. Instead, the players have to reason them out. Perhaps the party must align all the mirrors in the dwarf mines in a particular way, shining a beam of moonlight into the Chamber of Remembrance. Maybe the characters must decode a message they find in the evil cleric's sanctuary. Whatever the particulars of the puzzle, expect it to slow down the pace more than any other kind of encounter. While these encounters can be among the most memorable in an adventure, they require delicate handling as far as the flow of the scenario is concerned. Make sure the players have a good solid battle right before they encounter the puzzle and immediately after they solve it. If the players are struggling with a particularly lengthy riddle, a random encounter right in the middle of their attempts to solve the puzzle might be appropriate. In any case, the puzzle should be placed appropriately in the adventure so that the DM doesn't feel the need to rush it along by giving the players hints. The players will enjoy the puzzle more if they solve it themselves, so the DM should be ready to let them struggle for a while, knowing that she has another big battle ready for them in the next encounter.

• **The Cut Scene:** Although rarely seen in adventure scenarios, the cut scene is a common device used in movies, books, and even computer games. A cut scene (or cut-away in film and literature parlance) is a short interlude that shows something the main characters do not know—usually the villain, busily working to bring his nefarious plots to fruition. Cut scenes are usually avoided in adventure scenarios because DMs don't want to give players any information for free. Nevertheless, for those who have seen the technique put to good use in video games, it's not hard to imagine how it could be woven into a D&D adventure. Furthermore, because most D&D players have also played a number of computer games, the experience won't be nearly so jarring as one might expect.

The advantage of using a cut scene—beyond the chance to introduce your villain and shed light on his vile scheme—is that, like a visual description, a cut-scene gives you total control over pace. Your players simply sit and listen as you describe a far-away event. This provides an excellent break between combats.

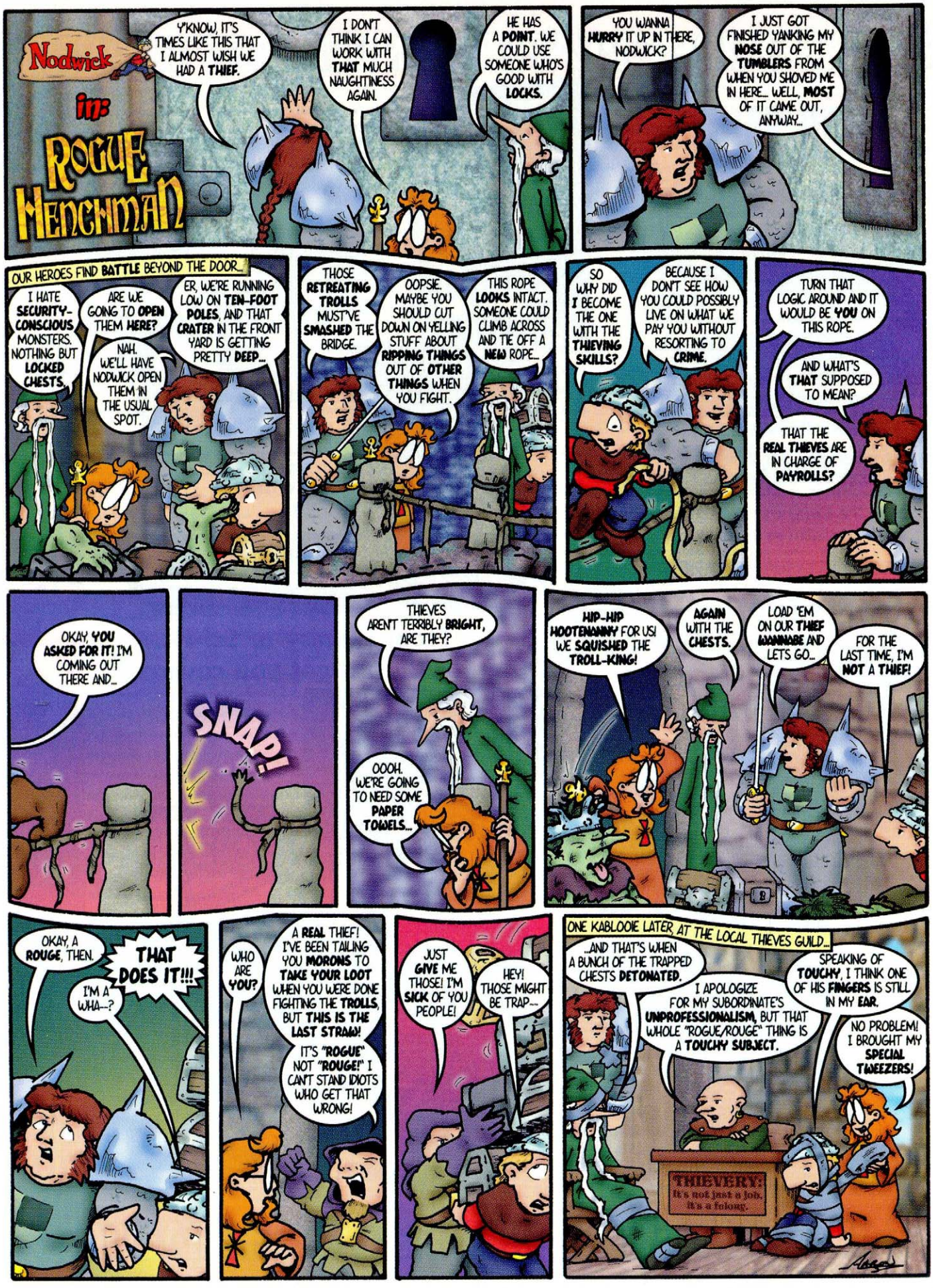
• **Snack Break:** Sooner or later, the players are going to need to visit the bathroom, load up on munchies, make a quick call home, and generally stretch their legs. While it's impossible to mark these breaks in the adventure beforehand, the DM should be aware that the "intermission" in her adventure has as much impact on the pace of the night as any other break. It's usually a good idea to call for the break right after a protracted combat. Even though it might seem like the refrigerator raids will upset the DM's carefully crafted mood, in actuality, a break helps freshen the players' minds for the remainder of the adventure. After everyone comes back to the table, the DM should ease the players back into the game with a visual description, recapping the wreckage left from the last fight and reminding the players of their major goals.

FIXING "ASHETEK'S SEPULCHER"

With these pacing tips in mind, it's not hard to see where "Ashetek's Sepulcher" went wrong and how to make it right. The DM had one whole level filled with traps, followed by a level filled with undead. Why not bring up several of the undead from the second level to the first and use them to provide a break from the traps and puzzles? While it would be hard to work NPC encounters into a desolate crypt, the DM can move some of the background information about the mummy Ashetek—which she was including only for flavor—to an earlier point as well. Perhaps there's a room decorated with pictographs and arcane hieroglyphics depicting Ashetek using the very magic item that the party will later find. Now the players have something to think about while stumbling through the dusty tomb. The DM decides to include a room with a sunken floor that is swarming with deadly scorpions. This will create a nice "skill check" room for the party and requires some teamwork as well. Finally, the DM can create a pause before the final fight with Ashetek by describing his burial chamber in great detail—the wooden boat intended to ferry him to the other world, the canopic jars holding his vital organs, and the gold-inlaid lid to his sarcophagus, which slowly begins to open. . . .

The DM has actually added only a few elements to the adventure, but by rearranging their placement, she has ensured a better pace and thus a much more enjoyable evening.

Once you get used to measuring the pace of your adventures, you'll find yourself doing it without even thinking about it. It's simply a matter of giving your players everything they want, in the order you want to give it to them.


Nodwick
in:
ROGUE HENCHMAN
Y'KNOW, IT'S TIMES LIKE THIS THAT I ALMOST WISH WE HAD A THIEF.
I DON'T THINK I CAN WORK WITH THAT MUCH NAUGHTINESS AGAIN.
HE HAS A POINT. WE COULD USE SOMEONE WHO'S GOOD WITH LOCKS.
YOU WANNA HURRY IT UP IN THERE, NODWICK?
I JUST GOT FINISHED YANKING MY NOSE OUT OF THE TUMBLERS FROM WHEN YOU SHOVED ME IN HERE... WELL, MOST OF IT CAME OUT, ANYWAY...
OUR HEROES FIND BATTLE BEYOND THE DOOR...
I HATE SECURITY-CONSCIOUS MONSTERS. NOTHING BUT LOCKED CHESTS.
ARE WE GOING TO OPEN THEM HERE?
NAH. WE'LL HAVE NODWICK OPEN THEM IN THE USUAL SPOT.
ER, WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON TEN-FOOT POLES, AND THAT CRATER IN THE FRONT YARD IS GETTING PRETTY DEEP...
THOSE RETREATING TROLLS MUST'VE SMASHED THE BRIDGE.
OOPSIE. MAYBE YOU SHOULD CUT DOWN ON YELLING STUFF ABOUT RIPPING THINGS OUT OF OTHER THINGS WHEN YOU FIGHT.
THIS ROPE LOOKS INTACT. SOMEONE COULD CLIMB ACROSS AND TIE OFF A NEW ROPE...
SO WHY DID I BECOME THE ONE WITH THE THIEVING SKILLS?
BECAUSE I DON'T SEE HOW YOU COULD POSSIBLY LIVE ON WHAT WE PAY YOU WITHOUT RESORTING TO CRIME.
TURN THAT LOGIC AROUND AND IT WOULD BE YOU ON THIS ROPE.
AND WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
THAT THE REAL THIEVES ARE IN CHARGE OF PAYROLLS?
OKAY, YOU ASKED FOR IT! I'M COMING OUT THERE AND...
SNAP!
THIEVES AREN'T TERRIBLY BRIGHT, ARE THEY?
OOOH. WE'RE GOING TO NEED SOME PAPER TOWELS...
HIP-HIP HOOTENANNY FOR US! WE SQUISHED THE TROLL-KING!
AGAIN WITH THE CHESTS.
LOAD 'EM ON OUR THIEF WANNABE AND LETS GO...
FOR THE LAST TIME, I'M NOT A THIEF!
OKAY, A ROUGE, THEN.
I'M A WHA---?
THAT DOES IT!!!
WHO ARE YOU?
A REAL THIEF! I'VE BEEN TAILING YOU MORONS TO TAKE YOUR LOOT WHEN YOU WERE DONE FIGHTING THE TROLLS, BUT THIS IS THE LAST STRAW!
IT'S "ROGUE" NOT "ROUGE!" I CAN'T STAND IDIOTS WHO GET THAT WRONG!
JUST GIVE ME THOSE! I'M SICK OF YOU PEOPLE!
HEY! THOSE MIGHT BE TRAP---
ONE KABLOOIE LATER, AT THE LOCAL THIEVES GUILD...
...AND THAT'S WHEN A BUNCH OF THE TRAPPED CHESTS DETONATED.
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY SUBORDINATE'S UNPROFESSIONALISM, BUT THAT WHOLE "ROGUE/ROUGE" THING IS A TOUCHY SUBJECT.
SPEAKING OF TOUCHY, I THINK ONE OF HIS FINGERS IS STILL IN MY EAR.
NO PROBLEM! I BROUGHT MY SPECIAL TWEEZERS!
THIEVERY: It's not just a job, it's a felony.

Sage Advice

Questions and Answers

by Skip Williams

Join the Sage this month for a look at spells and magic items, including an extended examination of the *unseen servant* spell.

Does *lightning bolt* work underwater?

Yes. It functions exactly the same as it does above water. Most spells work underwater the same way they work above water. The article "Water, Water Everywhere" in issue #291 covers the mechanics of the underwater environment in some detail.

Can a creature fly underwater? I've never heard of a normal bird flying underwater. What are the rules regarding this? If it's possible, what is the penalty to movement and maneuverability?

Flying creatures must swim when they enter the water, just as other creatures do. A *fly* spell lets you swim at your normal flying speed, but with the same maneuverability as other swimmers (perfect maneuverability). Incorporeal creatures also can move in this manner (they move through water just as easily as they move through other substances). Note that gaseous creatures cannot enter water.

The *apparatus of Kwalish* has presented some problems for my group. Can you cast spells with a range through the apparatus? Specifically, can a wizard inside the apparatus (not operating the levers) cast a *dispel magic* spell at a target or area outside the apparatus? Does being a magical item prevent the apparatus from being treated like any other obstruction?

Any solid barrier blocks magic by blocking line of effect between the caster and the spell's target or area. You can't cast spells through the hull of an *apparatus of Kwalish* without opening the hatch (and flooding the vehicle if it is submerged). Likewise, a closed window blocks line of effect for spells.

Does a ring require an "activate a magic item" action? Also, how frequently can one use a ring?

A ring is command activated (see page 192 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), unless the ring's description says otherwise. Any such item requires a standard action to activate.

Unless otherwise stated in the ring's description, there are no limits on the number of times it can be used, nor on how frequently it can be used. Since activating a ring requires an action, it usually cannot be activated more than once a round. Note that most rings function continuously once activated, allowing for virtually unlimited use unless the ring produces an effect that can be broken (see next question).

A player in my game is fond of activating his *ring of invisibility*, attacking, then becoming invisible again. Is that possible? How many times can a *ring of invisibility* be used?

A *ring of invisibility* requires a standard action to activate, just as most rings do (see previous question). Once a character activates the *ring of invisibility*, he can take any move-equivalent action. Having already used a standard action to active the ring, he won't be able to attack (or take any other standard action) until his next turn unless he is entitled to an extra partial action, such as from a *haste* spell.

If the character attacks on his next turn, the *invisibility* effect from the ring is broken, and the character cannot activate the ring until his next turn (again, unless he is entitled to an extra partial action).

A small discussion has evolved in my group regarding the use of the monk's wholeness of body ability in battle. We are settled that it takes an action to use this ability. We are not set on exactly how many hit points can be healed. Is it the monk's maximum number of hit points, or is it the monk's current hit point total? Could it be something else?

Wholeness of body is a supernatural ability, so it takes a standard action to use (but see next question).

Wholeness of body is a healing ability similar to the paladin's ability to lay on hands, except that the ability only works on the monk. Each day, the monk can heal damage to herself equal to twice her monk level; for example, a 7th-level monk can heal herself up to 14 points of damage each day. The monk does not have to use all her healing at once, but can heal herself in smaller amounts so long as the total amount healed that day does not exceed her daily limit.

Wholeness of body is a healing ability, so it doesn't do any good unless the monk has taken damage, and even then the monk cannot use this ability to exceed her normal maximum hit points, any excess healing the monk applies to herself is wasted.

The shadowdancer's hide in plain sight ability is a supernatural ability, so by definition, it takes a standard action to hide in plain sight, right? Also, the monk's speed becomes a supernatural ability at 9th level, so does a monk have to spend a standard action to move greater than 50 feet in one action?

Although supernatural abilities usually require a standard action to use, a few of them do not. Hide in plain sight, for example, works just like any other use of the Hide skill, so you use it as a move action or as part of a move action.

A monk's supernatural speed works any time the monk moves. In general, whenever a supernatural ability changes the way one of the user's actions works, it works just like the action it modifies.

When a character loses ability points due to a draining attack, poison, or whatever, how do enhancements such as a *headband of intellect* or *gauntlets of ogre power* work? Are those points lost first? If a character takes the item off, does the item still work? Does the character lose more points if he takes the item off?

Apply ability score losses to the victim's total score, no matter where the score came from. An ability enhancing item is not harmed by an ability draining attack, and if the victim takes off the item, the victim's ability score drops accordingly. No ability score, however, can be reduced to less than 0.

A creature with an ability score reduced to 0 cannot benefit from magic that enhances that ability score until rest or healing increases the ability to at least 1. For example, a human reduced to Strength 0 cannot benefit from a *bull's strength* spell or a *belt of giant strength* while the score is at 0. After a day of rest, the character recovers 1 point of Strength and can once again benefit from Strength enhancements.

When a dragon's description says the dragon has access to cleric spells and certain domain spells as arcane spells, do those act as special sorcerer spells accessible to the dragon, or are they a second set, as would be the case for a multiclassed character? Can the dragon use wands, staffs, or scrolls containing those spells?

The dragon has access to the spells, just as though they were arcane spells on the sorcerer list. The dragon uses these spells as part of its normal daily allotment of sorcerer spells. The dragon does not get any extra daily spells.

The dragon can use spell trigger items (wands and staffs) containing any spell that could be part of its sorcerer repertoire. The dragon can use spell completion items (scrolls) containing those spells, but only if the scrolls are arcane scrolls. The Sage discussed arcane scrolls that contain spells that usually are divine spells last month.

Can I make a wand of empowered *magic missile* with a caster level of 1 because it's still "really" a 1st-level spell, for a cost of 3 x 1 x 750 (effective spell level 3, caster level 1, wand multiplier), or does it need to be 5th level because that's the lowest level at which I can cast any 3rd-level spell?

It's the latter. An empowered *magic missile* is "really" just a 1st-level spell, but you have to be at least 5th level to cast it (if you're a wizard) because an empowered spell requires a spell slot two levels higher than normal. You have to use the higher level to calculate the wand's price, and you have to increase the wand's caster level accordingly. The example wand's market price is 11,250 gp (3 x 5 x 750). For that price, you get a wand that produces 3 *magic missiles* (a 5th-level caster creates 3 missiles with a *magic missile* spell), each dealing 1d4 x 1.5 points of damage.

Can I use the spellfire ability (from *Magic of Faerûn*) as a counterspell?

No, you cannot use spellfire as a counterspell, nor are counterspells effective against spellfire.

Does a person struck with a *negative energy ray* spell (from *Tome and Blood*) receive a saving throw or not? The spell header says "Will half (see text)," but the text makes no mention of whether the victim gets a save. I'm inclined to think there is no save, since the caster must hit with a ranged touch attack anyway.

Yes, the *negative energy ray* spell allows a Will save. The "see text" entry refers to undead being healed by the ray.

Can spells be cast for attacks of opportunity? The *Player's Handbook* says you can make a melee attack as an attack of opportunity. Does that mean touch spells count? What if you have a quickened spell available? What about spell-like or supernatural abilities?

You cannot cast a spell (any spell) as an attack of opportunity, nor can you use a spell-like ability or a supernatural ability as an attack of opportunity.

If an opponent provokes an attack of opportunity from you, you can only make a melee attack or do something that you do as a melee attack (such as trip the opponent). Note that some spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities have ongoing or automatic effects that will come into play during an attack of opportunity. For example, if you are already holding the charge for a touch spell such as *shocking grasp* or you have a spell such as *produce flame* running, you can use the touch attacks these spells provide as attacks of opportunity. Likewise, energy drain is a supernatural ability, but it usually works whenever the creature makes a successful melee attack and will work as part of an attack of opportunity.

My wizard used *summon monster VI* to summon a red slaad for a battle. One of a slaad's attacks is implanting eggs in its victims, which is apparently how slaadi reproduce. Will the eggs disappear when the spell expires and the slaad departs, or do they remain?

Any magical effect a summoned creature creates ends when the summoning ends (even if it is normally

permanent). Many such effects, however, actually have instantaneous durations, but lasting consequences. Energy drain, for example, is instantaneous, though the victim might feel the loss for a long time.

Anything separated from a summoned creature's body also vanishes when the summoning ends. This includes parts severed from the body and anything produced from the creature's body, such as poison or eggs. In the case of poison, any effects the venom has already caused remain. For example, a summoned fiendish viper bites and poisons a character, who suffers 3 points of Constitution damage. If the summoning ends before the poison's onset time expires, the poisoned character suffers no additional effects from the poison, but the 3 points of Constitution damage remain.

Can a summoned monster summon another monster? What if it has a racial ability to summon others of its kind? For example, can a summoned mephit summon another mephit? Can either of these creatures immediately summon again once they are summoned, or is there a waiting period prior to them acting normally and using the special ability?

A summoned creature cannot use any of its own summoning abilities (see Summoning, page 157 of the *Player's Handbook*) while the effect that summoned it lasts. This applies to any spells or devices it has as well as to any innate summoning abilities it has.

Our companion was turned to stone, and we want to use a *teleport* spell to get him out of danger. Does his weight increase, or is it the same? What would the weight change be if it does?

Stone is certainly heavier than flesh. As a rule of thumb, a petrified character is about 2.5 times heavier than normal.

My group and I were discussing ways to kill trolls in the D&D game. I mentioned coup de grace as an effective way to kill trolls, but my friends did not believe what I was telling them. I'm pretty sure I read this somewhere, and I'm also pretty sure anything that can receive a critical can be affected by a coup de grace. I realize that if the DM rules that trolls are unaffected then they are, but I sure would like some backup here.

Yes, you can perform a coup de grace against a troll (or against any other creature with regeneration). To do so, you have to use an attack that deals normal damage to the creature (fire or acid in the case of a troll). See the section on regeneration in the introduction to the *Monster Manual*.

You cannot perform a coup de grace on a creature that is not subject to critical hits (see coup de grace on page 133 of the *Player's Handbook*), but you can perform a coup de grace on any other creature.

Can you kill a troll with the *phantasmal killer* spell?

Yes. Regeneration does not provide protection against death effects or against other special effects that cause death, such as massive damage, drowning, starvation, or having one's Constitution score reduced to 0. If the troll fails both saves against a *phantasmal killer* spell, it dies and its regeneration power will not bring it back.

When a *Bigby's forceful hand* spell bull rushes an opponent, does the opponent get an attack of opportunity against the *forceful hand*? Does a *Bigby's grasping hand* trigger an attack of opportunity when it grapples a foe?

No in both cases. Mobile spell effects, even ones that can be attacked as though they were creatures, do not trigger attacks of opportunity when they act or move unless their descriptions say they do.

Can the servant you create with the *unseen servant* spell fly? Can it only move along the ground? Does the servant trigger attacks of opportunity when it moves?

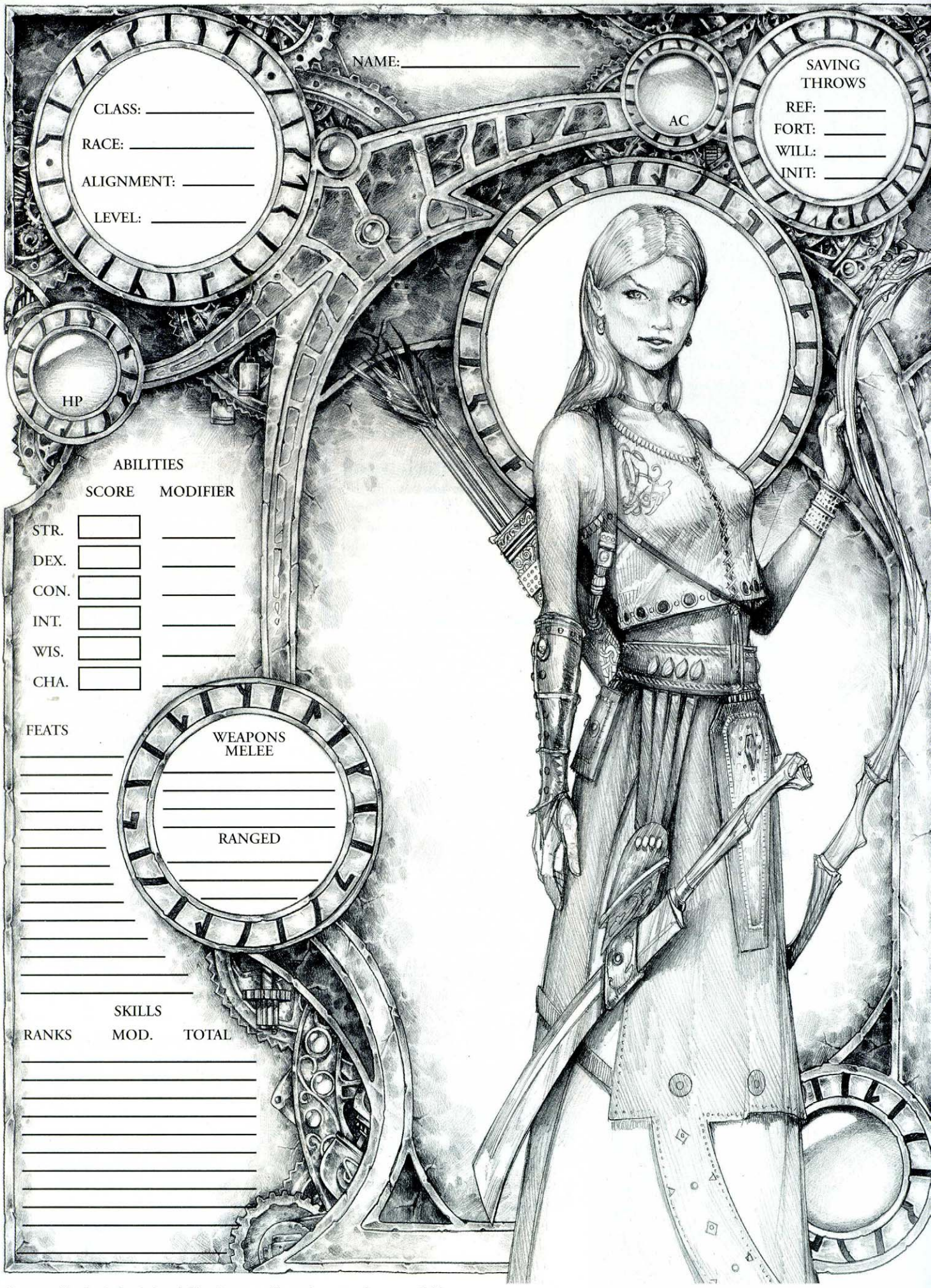
Though an *unseen servant* does not have a fly speed, the caster can nevertheless direct the servant to go anywhere within the spell's range (including up or down), provided that the servant does not pass through a solid barrier to get there and that the caster has line of effect to the servant at the beginning of its movement for the turn. As noted in the previous question, the servant's movement does not trigger attacks of opportunity (and the servant is not subject to melee attacks in any case).

Can an *unseen servant* run? Is it subject to encumbrance?

Though the spell description mentions "running and fetching," an *unseen servant* cannot use the run action. An *unseen servant* has a Strength score, and it is subject to the encumbrance rules. It moves at its full speed of 15 feet only when carrying a load of 6 pounds or less. If carrying 7 to 20 pounds its speed is 10 feet. It also moves at a speed of 10 feet when dragging 7 to 100 pounds. Because it has a Strength of 2, it can lift as much as 40 pounds (double its heavy load), and can move 5 feet each round (staggering) when doing so. Note that an *unseen servant* must move along the ground when dragging something, but it can move in three dimensions when carrying anything it can lift.

How much space does an *unseen servant* take up? Does it block a space or provide cover?

An *unseen servant* is a shapeless force. It takes up no space (but as a spell effect it cannot pass barriers) and does not provide cover. It does not block attacks or magical effects, and it does not prevent movement through the space were it is located. When an *unseen servant* spell is cast, however, you do need to keep track of its location, because the spell ends if the caster goes out of range. You'll also need to know the servant's location to know how long it takes the servant to carry something to the caster, and, since area-effect spells can destroy the servant, you'll need to know its location to know if an area-effect spell harms it.

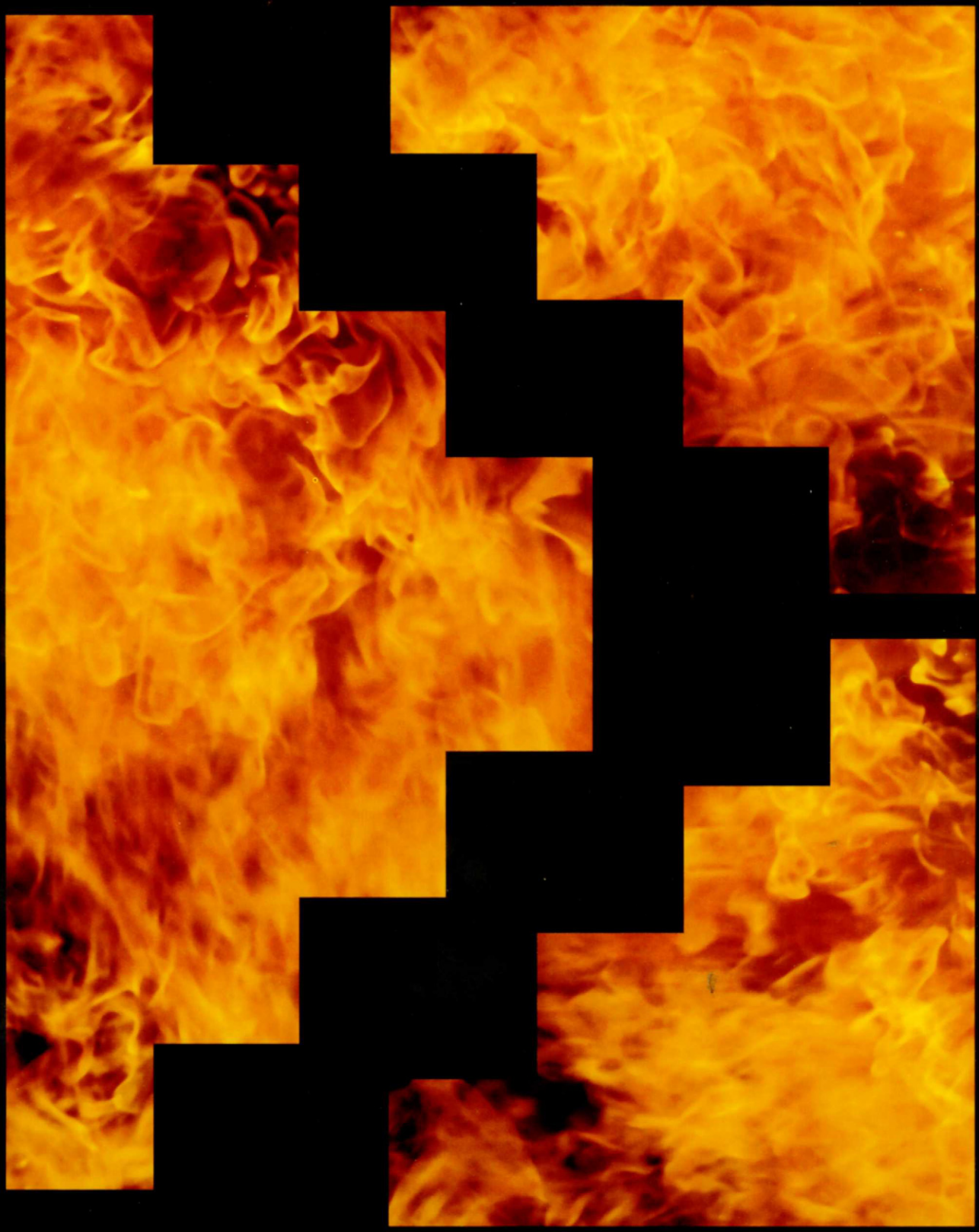


Illustrated by Arnie Swekel and Glen Angus · More character sheets available at www.gangus.net

FIREBALL
Spell Template

NEW FIREBALL GAME TOOL

Cut out the spell template below and tape it together to measure the exact area of *fireball* or any other spell with a 20-foot radius. Spells and psionic powers with the appropriate area are listed on the back of the template. It might help to tape a thin strip of the scrap cardstock to the back of the template to reinforce the seams between the sections.



Photographer: EyeWire Collection

WIZARD
Acid Storm
Avoid Planar Effects
Blacklight
Delayed Blast Fireball
Fireball
Fire Spiders
Flashburst
Ice Storm
Leomund's Tiny Hut
Negative Energy Burst
Scintillating Sphere
Web

CLERIC
Avoid Planar Effects
Chaos Hammer
Cloak of Chaos
Consecrate
Desecrate
Healing Circle
Holy Aura
Holy Smite
Shadowblast
Unholy Aura
Unholy Blight

DRUID
Healing Circle
Ice Storm
Shadowblast
Storm Tower
Warp Wood
Waterball

SHUGENJA
Circle of Flame
Jade Aura
Jade Strike
Master of the Rolling River

PSION
Affinity Field
Brilliant Blast
Mass Concussion
Whitefire